AMONG THE BRAHMINS AND PARIAHS

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By J. A. SAUTER

Translated from the German
BY
BERNARD MIALL

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ARUN

IT IS NOW A YEAR since I sent forth into the world a little book on "My Indian Friends." At the time of its publication the sketches contained in the book were expressions of desire, of ardent longing. I hoped that a twelvemonth later I should be able to entertain my friends with more cheerful recollections. But for me the year now overpast was a time of profound bodily and mental suffering. And so it comes about that these new pictures too, pictures which in the sleepless nights pleaded for remembrance, whether those that I welcomed or those that lay heavy on my heart, are less cheerful than I could have wished them to be.

Those among whom my book made friends asked me many things concerning Arun. Who was this amazing person? How did I come to make his acquaintance? So his portrait may well be the first of this new series.

One day, when I had been some six months in Calcutta, where I used to frequent many of

the homes of the Hindu community, I was sitting in the Club with the librarian of the Imperial Library of Calcutta, whom I knew to be a great lover of youth, and as usual, in conversing with him, I employed his native language, Bengali. As I sat there my gaze wandered idly from our reading-room to the card-room, where members of the English community, judges and high officials in the Indian Civil Service, were playing bridge with a few Hindu gentlemen. My gaze was as though riveted upon the figure of Arun. I fell silent; I heard no more of what my friend was telling me, but gazed fixedly upon that glorious and kingly countenance.

In my own country, and during my many wanderings, East and West, I have seen many a noble countenance, but the face of my friend Arun outshone them all. As he sat there, in his national costume, with his bright green silken turban embroidered with threads of gold, he was the very image of one of the divine heroes as the ancient Hindu poets have described them. His features were pale and delicately chiselled; tender, almost effeminate in expression, showing a faint tinge of red in the cheeks. Every least fractional line or contour of his features displayed such absolute harmony with the whole that it might have been carved from some precious gem by the hand of a master. The nose was slightly aquiline; as for the sensitive nostrils, I had never seen their like. Large, luminous black eyes, that seemed to reflect every

movement of the mind, they were surrounded by magnificent lashes. He sat erect, yet with the leisured dignity of a king. Once he laughed, and his laugh rang through the room as clearly as though one had smitten a silver bell with a little rod, and as he laughed I saw that all who were present in that room felt their hearts invaded by the warmth of his joy. I did not express a wish to make his acquaintance, but there was in my inner self some irresistible force that drew me to his side; I was on the point of standing up and going over to him, no matter what the spectators might think, so that I might gaze into those dark, flashing eyes and say to him: "I have waited for you since I was born; it is for your sake I have crossed the ocean; for it is ordained by the Law of Karma that we are to be friends—that we are to be one!" The mighty flame that was then kindled within me must have spread itself abroad as though by sparks which the wind bears away from a fire in order to kindle fresh flames in some other place. He looked up, and our eyes met across the intervening space. And we both rose to our feet. Harinath Deb knew him, and did what had now become almost superfluous: he introduced us.

"I should like to know you," he said, in English, in that clear voice of his, and we spoke together for perhaps half an hour, and then took leave of one another, and I had to promise to meet him on the following day. This was the beginning of that wonderful friendship that to

me has been a tower of strength and a guiding light throughout the years of my life in India; that even to-day, when the ugliness of life encompasses me about until I seem on the verge of sinking into some bottomless morass, hovers always before me like a beloved star whose quivering brilliance speaks of hope and courage. Here truly was the promise of the Scriptures fulfilled: "And though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death . . . yet art Thou with me. . . ."

Not a day went by but we met, were it only for an hour, and often I spent more of the week in his house than in my own. While I was in his house I entered fully into the family life of the Hindu. I was conscious of the power of a most ancient civilization, and enjoyed, as his brother, the innocent happiness of the intimate life of a Hindu family. He was no orthodox Hindu, but as little as I myself did he grant the existence of chance, of accident. That we met one another was for us both the predestined fulfilment of the Law, and to-day, when I look back on that time (and it may well be that I shall never again in this earthly life behold my spiritual home), I know, with absolute conviction, that any good that there is in my soul, that urges me to love mankind, as I see it about me, I owe solely to him. He it was who first inspired me. We often sat together into the small hours of the morning on the divan or in the garden, where the myriad fireflies threaded their way through the thickets of jasmin and

rose, speaking of the things that lie hidden deep in our souls, or far above us in the infinity of space. No less beautiful than he, a very queen from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet, was his young wife—and she was still quite young—whom I came to know when my acquaintance with him was two months old. In quite a short time we were three inseparables, although the European and Indian communities outside his home could never be allowed to know that I had entered his zenana.

There were in Calcutta various native theatres, but they were all so steeped in the spirit of the Occidental music-hall that only the palest glimmer was left of the culture or the dramatic art of the real India. There was the Minerva Theatre, where I once witnessed a performance of Shakespeare's "King John." In the *entr'actes* the jesters appeared on the boards, while during the performance the sellers of lemonade and sweetmeats and cigarettes plied their trade between the rows of seats. The music was a hotch-potch of popular European band music and the Hindu tom-tom. Arun was the first to take me to the places where the genuine, ancient Hindu drama is still performed.

As an example, I will record one of those journeys on which he taught me to understand something of the intimate manners and customs of Hinduism. I entered his house in Harrington Street, Calcutta, as a European, and left it, companioned by him and his secretary, clad as

a Bengali Babu.[1] My fellow-travellers by rail were often astonished by my fair complexion, but a word from him was enough to satisfy them that I was, like him, a Hindu. After a ten hours' railway journey we came to a little station in Dobrapur.[2] It was night. A flickering oil lamp lit the drowsy station, but outside, under the trees, was a huddled mass of torches, that filled the cool night air with the fragrance of burning resin. We sat side by side in an ox-cart, driving slowly through the jungle, now encompassed by darkness, solemn and silent, along the river-side, to Arun's native village, where a wedding was about to take place. The procession which had delayed us at the railway station was now far in front of us, and it was only now and again that we heard some one of its number call: "Hai, brother, where are you?" "Here we are, here!" we replied from our cart, and the two lively little oxen shook their heads until the silver bells upon their necks chimed in the darkness.

Day came slowly, rising out of the east and flooding the world, changing the blackness of night into grey, until the river became plainly visible, and as we came to the village we were able to make out the farther bank, overgrown

[1] Babu = actually "Mister"; but in course of time, on the lips of foreigners, it has become the more or less contemptuous epithet for the middle-class Bengali. A somewhat vulgar comic song begins:

"'Kutchharawani, kutchharawani'—Bengali Babu"—
"'It's all one to me, I don't care if you do,'
Says the Bengali-Babu."

[2] In the coal-mining district of Assenvole.

with thorn-trees: a few men were already squatting before the doors of their huts, smoking their *chillums*,[1] but indoors all was bustling life. Brightly flickering fires burned in iron braziers on either side of the entrance to the courtyard. The house itself looked like an ancient citadel; all we could see of it was the lofty yellow wall of dried mud, perhaps twelve feet in height. Inside the entry, to the right, was a wooden daïs for the musicians. The musicians themselves lay sleeping on the ground, wrapped in their blankets. The house was full of guests. They lay sleeping on the floor, close together, even on the verandah of the inner courtyard, in the middle of which blazed a great fire, radiating a pleasant warmth, that invited to sleep or to intimate conversation.

But we were tired, and after perhaps half an hour of mutual greetings and questions concerning our journey, we were shown into a little room not far from the women's quarters. Arun's uncle wanted to put me in a separate room, next to my friend's, but Arun, well aware that if I were alone I should be overwhelmed with unwelcome questions as to "how?" and "why?" made every imaginable excuse that would ensure that we should be left together in his little room. We could hardly expect to sleep, for the only bed in the room, perhaps a foot above the ground, was not really long enough for a man of average build, and was scarcely two feet wide.

[1] Small earthenware pipes, the lower part being wrapped about with a wet rag, in order to cool the bowl.

We should gladly have whiled away the one or two hours that lay between us and the busy hours of the day with desultory converse, but the attentive uncle, painfully hospitable, had ordered a servant to remain in the room, so that he might fan us while we slept. We could not get rid of him without giving offence, and so submitted to the inevitable.

The festive wedding-banquet took place on the evening after our arrival. The uncle came to our room asking Arun to accompany him. I waited and waited for his return, for I did not care to appear among the guests without him. In his place, however, came a kinsman, who begged me to follow him. He led me behind the house to a bathroom, where I saw a carpet outspread upon the floor, and beside it a number of European plates and dishes filled with Indian messes. So Arun's uncle had his suspicions of me, and wished to treat me as an unclean person! He could not have offered a Hindu a greater insult. So much I knew already, although I had been only six months in India. Consequently, on approaching the carpet, I did not remove my slippers, but trod upon it and kicked the crockery all over the floor, and then left the room. Returning to the room where I had slept, I put together the more important of our possessions, and left the house. But I had scarcely crossed the threshold when Arun overtook me, accompanied by his uncle; the latter abashed and ashamed. Arun had had a sharp and forcible conversation with his uncle,

the gist of it being as follows: "I know what I owe to my family. If I bring my friend here he comes as a Hindu and not as a European. And as you have insulted him I shall leave the house with him." What was his uncle to do? Arun was not merely his nephew; since he was a chieftain, he was the supreme head of the family; and as I learned later, he was also his uncle's creditor. . . . Finally we consented to re-enter the house, and mingled with the guests as orthodox Hindus. This, for me, was the acid test. If our host had had his way, then I, like thousands of my kind, must have remained for ever an outcast.

What bound Arun and myself in the bonds of eternal friendship was an incident of our journey to Deoghar. Six young kinsmen of Arun's had joined us; indeed, it was really they who, out of mere exuberant high spirits, had proposed our journey. Their purpose was the ascent of Parasnath, the loftiest summit in Bengal. The track led us for almost two hours through the dense woods and thickets and along the leaf-hidden paths that climbed the mountain-side. It was a hot day, although as yet it was not nine o'clock. Our feet were scorched as though we were treading on sheets of hot iron, and the thorn-covered shoots of the bamboo-thickets snatched greedily at our waist-cloths and tore our flesh. Our young friends had conceived quite a different idea of the ascent, and when we came to a spot of wonderful beauty, where, from a dense grove of trees, perhaps

a hundred and fifty feet in height, a cool spring gushed forth, pouring into a basin of natural formation, they laid themselves down beside the spring, in the shadow of the trees, and bade their servants bring them food. They had no desire to go any farther.

So we took our leave of them, in order to reach the summit of the mountain before the heat of the day had become unbearable. The European mountain-climber can have no conception of the difficulty of such ascents. There was no path, not even a jungle track, and the rays of the sun were reflected back upon us from the granite cliffs between which we were travelling, and we could plainly feel the waves of heat strike upon us, as though we were passing the open doors of a blast-furnace. Over and over again we fell into some fissure of the rocky soil, treacherously filled with, and disguised by, dead leaves, and never once were we able, gazing upwards, to obtain a glimpse of our goal, since we were surrounded on every side by giant blocks of granite. Several times we discovered that instead of going forwards we had made a complete circuit of the same huge rock, and once we found ourselves in a cul-de-sac. On either side of us rose a gigantic mass of rock, the distance dividing that on our right from that on our left being often less than a yard, and before us, too, was a wall of rock like a closed door. Our only possible tactics, as far as I could see, was to turn our faces to the rock, standing back to back, and to clamber

upwards, with hands and feet pressed against the rocky wall. The rocks were perhaps thirty feet in height; we were gasping with heat and fatigue, and we admitted afterwards that each of us had secretly thought: "Good God! I *must* hold out a moment longer, or we shall both be done for!" And as we reached the top, exhausted, and flung ourselves down upon the stone for a brief rest—since any protracted period of repose there would have ended in a fatal sunstroke—we saw, not far before us, the summit of a mountain, a rounded rock, on which—by what miracle who shall say?—there stood a bright green clump of bushes. None the less, it was not until three-quarters of an hour later that we finally completed our climb.

Shortly before we reached the summit the track led up to the mouth of a cave at the foot of an impracticable mass of rock. As I was the taller I entered first, but scarcely had I found my footing in the cave than I became conscious of a feeling of discomfort and anxiety, and a suffocating odour, which betrayed the fact that this was the den of a wild beast; and we knew that the surrounding parts, and especially the slopes of Parasnath, were much frequented by tigers and leopards. For a few moments I remained motionless, but as nothing moved I concluded that the cave was empty, and drew Arun after me. At the farther end of the cave, which just afforded us standing room, a gleam of light pierced the darkness, and we crept towards it. It was an exit from the cave, and

it lay immediately beneath the final mass of rock that formed the summit of the hill. When we had at last surmounted this, Arun, that he might later on possess a proof of the successful accomplishment of our purpose, tore a broad width from his already tattered waist-cloth [1] and fastened it to a bough of one of the bushes that grew there. Our faces, and indeed our whole bodies, were bleeding; our hands and feet were cut and abraded, and on our knees the skin was scored through as with small, sharp knives. Our heads were burning as though stuck in a pot of steaming porridge, and we were wearied almost to death. And yet the spectacle before us was well worth the cost. In a vast circle lay the four-and-twenty summits of the Parganas range, each of them resembling in structure that on which we were standing; like giants' houses, piled up in wild disorder, as though by the hand of a Cyclops, between which we saw deep green forests, waving fields of grain, and, in the far distance, the infinite waste of the jungle. Here and there a group of trees showed in the distance, a mere dark speck, but above them hung a light smoke, rising from the invisible huts concealed amidst the green groves of trees. Over all lay the quivering ether, over mountain and village and countryside, and the gleaming silver ribbon of the river, that seemed to creep away into the distance; and from the rocks beneath our feet rose the heady odours of scorching

[1] Dhoti.

stone and sun-dried grasses, each after its own kind, which the jungle gives forth in the hot noontide hour. Above us, high in the blue heavens, a vulture hovered.

It was already late in the afternoon when we reached the heart of the forest, for we had strayed from the beaten track, to find ourselves in a dried-up river-bed. So far we had not had a drop of water; our tongues were parched with thirst, and a feeling of enchantment came over us: that odd, unpleasant, nightmare feeling that someone has laid a spell on one's brain, causing, as it were, tiny, effervescing bubbles to rise and expand, increasing the pressure of the blood upon the walls of the arteries and compressing the brain itself, so that one thinks, expectant, from moment to moment: "Now your head is just going to explode, to burst into pieces; you will no longer be conscious; you will drop dead or become lunatic." And thus we reeled dizzily forwards, without will, without thought; things that went forward, no more. We no longer spoke to one another; but one of us would seize the other's hand if he stumbled too often; and at last we sank to the ground, exhausted.

Then all of a sudden we heard the voices of several men; plainly they could not be far away. As though at the touch of a magic wand, new life seemed to flow in our veins. Hope gave restored strength to bodies wearied almost to death, and we shouted as men shout in despair before they sink for the last time in a wild,

foaming sea. But then suddenly we fell silent, and each of us read in the other's face terror, and even despair. The voices came no nearer; they were moving away from us rather, and we could plainly hear the terrified cry: "Spirits—spirits!"

We both burst into tears and embraced one another, as though we had received our sentence of death. Arun, although he could hardly move his tongue, declared: "Now we are brothers! This is our Karma!" But scarcely had he spoken when a hound bayed from the rock before us; Arun's cousin had brought the beast with him when he started on his excursion. Ten minutes later we were sitting amidst a circle of friends and relations, unable to eat, eager only to drink the cool, priceless water that dripped from the rock, and to pour it over the burning cuts and scratches that covered our bodies. The rest of the party had begun to fear that we were lost, but they were even more afraid of going out into the wilderness to look for us. Two had gone down as far as the Sontali village, in order to bring some of the villagers back with them.

A week later Arun's house-priest completed the holy ceremony of blood-brotherhood, when Arun's blood mingled with mine, so that we became brothers, in time and in eternity.

Such is Arun—honoured by all, by the highest in the land and the humblest of his servants. Where he goes he brings with him joy, as does the morning sun when it shines forth from behind the dark mountains.

DEOGHAR

TO HOLY KASI (Benares), as to the almost equally venerable Deoghar, whose beauty lies concealed in the heart of the dark-blue mountains—to the sunny valley of Parganas, the path leads by Gaya, known also by the name of Buddha-Gaya, because there Gautama the sublime, beneath the still surviving fig-tree, received illumination as to those things which on a later day he was to preach to the monks in the groves of Sarnath, near Benares, as the highest happiness of which mortal man is capable.

Years have gone by since I first saw Benares, the holy city, the centre of Hinduism, in the blazing sunlight, or the silver radiance of the moon. The pious Christian, returning home from his pilgrimage to Rome or Jerusalem, brings with him some kind of souvenir, some memorial of the holy place that was the goal of his pilgrimage. Not so the Hindu; Benares is so holy that not even the dust of its streets may be carried away. As I was not aware of this I brought home with me, on returning from my visit, a curiously shaped earthenware bowl, intended as the bowl of a water-pipe or *chillum*, for my beloved host, Prince von H——. He

accepted the present. Unfortunately one of his nephews asked me whether the thing had been bought in Benares, and when I replied that it had, the old Prince threw the bowl from him with the words: "Kasi-Mati!" (Benares earth!), rose to his feet, and went over to the house temple, in order to cleanse himself from sin by ablution. Only objects made of metal—that is, of silver or brass—even though images of the gods, may be taken away from Benares. As a matter of fact, the wholesale and retail merchants in Benares drive a magnificent trade with their bronze idols, their finely woven fabrics and their silversmith's work. But the truly pious Hindu goes so far as to regard even these things as belonging only to Benares.

Benares! It is not only a name; not only the memorial of a proud past. It is still, even to-day, the focal point at which is concentrated the whole mental and spiritual life of two hundred and fifty millions of human beings, and whence that life is radiated forth again upon the surging masses of humanity on the Indian frontiers. The mysterious secret power which permeates and controls the religious and even the political life of India has its roots in Benares. If it can be said of any city in the world that it is the heart of a nation, it may truly be said of Benares. There are travellers who see nothing extraordinary in Benares. They are disgusted by the burning corpses, the parasites and fanatics in the streets, and the stench arising from the moat surrounding the city. What a different

impression would they receive were they to visit Benares by night instead of by day! I recollect a journey to Benares undertaken in the month of May, when city and river were bathed in the light of the full moon; and as the train thundered across the bridge the stars and the silver crescent of the moon were reflected in the majestic flood of the Ganges as its waters glided downwards to the sea. The pious awe displayed by the Hindu pilgrims impressed even a stranger's mind.

Benares! A magical word! The sufferings and the fatigue of a journey often many months in length are all forgotten at the sight of the holy city! How many have I seen who had made the long pilgrimage afoot from the extremest south of Hindustan! Their faces betrayed long weeks of hardship, yet were radiant with pious ecstasy, when, standing upon the higher steps of the ghats, they gazed down upon the water of the sacred river! How often did I watch the silent funeral processions passing through the holy city!—and when I heard the solemn "Bol Hari, Bol Hari" of those who carried the bier, it was as though I heard again the joyful *Kyrie Eleison* of my own days of childish faith.

Centuries have gone by, religions have been swept away by the tides of time and lost in the silent ocean of oblivion; nations have come and gone, but the sacrifices and the hymns to the Devas are even to-day offered up and sung as in the days of the great Gautama, and long

before even that remote period. The armies of Alexander the Great overran the land, but little trace of them remains, whether in the monuments and the buildings of the country, or in its myths and its poetry. In vain did the Moslem Moguls, with despotic cruelty, strive to enslave the soul of Hindustan to the Crescent; to-day the ruins of their palaces and fortresses bear witness to the vanity of their attempt. In spite of all, Brahminism has remained erect, unchanging through the changing ages, like a rock amidst foaming breakers. The Kohan Mosque, still standing to-day on the topmost heights of the city, is no memorial of victory, but only the mighty witness of a vain, if heroic, attempt to destroy a religion that has its roots in the earliest stages of human history. The stupendous ruins of the Buddhist monastery, which, probably dating from a period some two centuries later than the death of Buddha, was built in lonely Sarnath by the liberal hand of the great Asoka, are even in their silence eloquent witnesses that the great reformation brought about by the mendicant monk was powerless to shake the might of Brahminism. The religion of Buddha, or, to speak more exactly, his philosophy, sought and found asylum in other countries, far from its original home. The magnificent work of art erected by Asoka is to-day a heap of stones, and only its half-effaced inscriptions tell us that Buddha once passed through this countryside and taught its people. But Kasi, the central point of Hinduism, has

braved the storms of the centuries, and the gilt pinnacles of its white temples loudly and insistently proclaim the supremacy of Brahminism in the past, the present and the future. It is in the holy city that the Hindu university has just been founded whose exclusive aim it is, not merely to preserve the doctrine of the Vedas, but to preach it to the whole world. More than ever will Benares be the central point of intellectual, religious, literary and political life of Hinduism.

On the other hand, Gaya, which also lies in the valley of the Ganges—Gaya, the spot where Buddha, after long prayer and meditation, discovered the four essential truths, is dead. Once the peoples of Northern India surged in a living tide about the illuminate Buddha; but to-day their children are Hindus or Mohammedans, while his followers are scattered over Tibet, China, Burma and Ceylon; and it is a strange thing that he, who, if he did not precisely deny the existence of a personal God, at least declared it to be a matter of indifference, has now himself become the object of a crass idolatry. In Ceylon men worship his tooth, his footprint; and there is not a single convent that does not advertise and exploit some sort of a relic of the Sublime One. But among the millions of his disciples, who, as monks, spend a life of inaction and monotony in the thoughtless and mechanical repetition of his words, there are perhaps a dozen, scarcely more, who understand what they read or sing in their pious hymns.

With the death of King Asoka, Buddhism lost its most powerful protector in Further India. A religion which is based on a philosophy, and a philosophy that preaches the absolute annihilation of the soul, of the personality, which to the individual man constitutes the very meaning of his life and aspirations, cannot assuage the spiritual hunger of the masses. Despite all the reasoned arguments against the existence of a God, they seek in hours of suffering and temptation a consolation that is beyond our human wisdom. In the passage of centuries Buddhism has more and more lost its atheistic and nihilistic features, and has once more become a theistic religion. But the pure and simple teaching of the Buddha has given place to a religion that has all but foundered in the mire of a base idolatry and superstition, in the worship of saints, and of relics whose authenticity is a matter of dogmatic assertion, and in absurd and meaningless ceremonies, led by a purblind priesthood and supported by a laity whose ignorance is deplorable.

Just as the uneducated Moslem believes that he is doing something meritorious when he utters his unthinking shouts of "Allah! Allah!" so thinks the Buddhist when he murmurs the mysterious syllables "Om mani padmi hum" (the treasure is in the lotus flower). This is the great Buddhist prayer, the first learned by the little child, the war-cry on the field of battle, and the last sigh of the dying man. The words are written on the corner-posts of the houses,

and in every temple; they flutter from the boughs of the trees, on little scraps of cloth or paper, or on long strips of cotton stretched from house to house. The nomads who wander across the snow-covered plains of the Himalayas, the idle and lethargic priests of Ceylon, the pilgrims, and even the furtive thief, all murmur the same mysterious words: "Om mani padmi hum." The religious impulse and the cravings of the human heart have proved themselves stronger than all the speculations of the philosophers, and if Buddha neglected, whether deliberately or without precise intention, to provide a deity for those who were seeking a God, these latter, in the course of the ages, have re-created a deity for themselves, or borrowed one from the Brahmin Olympus, to set it up in their temples and worship it. And the prayer that Buddha never taught them, since he regarded prayer as useless, falls from their lips to-day, although it has become but a senseless babble. A kind of terror seizes upon the inquirer who delves into the sources of history when he glances through the annals of Buddhism, and we may sadly ask ourselves what is the purpose of it all, what is the meaning of such pure and lofty intentions, when we consider the ignorant crowds that bend the knee before the images of Buddha, that very Buddha who told his disciple Ananda, the St. John of Buddhism: "For this reason, O Ananda, be thou thine own lamp, thine own refuge, thine own light; follow not after that which is without thee, but take hold upon the truth as thine only

guide through life. Seek no help of any but thyself!"

Truly, since we must regard the greed and immorality of the ignorant yet arrogant monastic character with a certain feeling of detestation, we may justifiably ask ourselves: To what end? Buddhism is the religion of spiritual suicide, or so it seems to-day, when all that is left of this ancient and mighty faith is, as it were, its empty husk. We have here a proof that Buddha's philosophy already bore within it the seed of self-destruction, because it lacked that which is the foundation of every religion: faith in a personal, living God and Father. Gaya, despite the traffic in its streets and the crowds of worshippers in its temples, fills the mind with thoughts of death and annihilation. But let us now return to my visit to Deoghar.

The fiercest heat of the day was over. The shadows of the trees and bushes along the road were growing longer, warning me that evening was drawing nigh, and that I was approaching the first stage of my journey, Baidyanath. This is a place of no importance, although a small branch line runs thence to holy Deoghar, a three hours' journey; Deoghar, the Bethel or House of God of Upper Bengal.

On our train was the Nawab of R——, with his zenana, which consisted of four women. Travelling was a somewhat ceremonious affair for this princely family, since in the Nawab's house the Moslem usages of the purdah were most strictly observed. The removal of his

household and its effects from the express train which had brought it from Calcutta to the accommodation reserved for it in the local train, which had already been awaiting it for some time, occupied fully an hour. This performance interested me greatly, although as a Hindu of the better class of society—for such my clothing, on that occasion, proclaimed me to be—I could not display any curiosity. So I strolled up and down, apparently indifferent, yet really watching the performance with the eyes of a lynx. Eventually a *palki* (palanquin or sedan-chair) was brought up by four native porters. The *palki* was halted at the door of the railway-carriage, while curtains were spread above it and hung on either side, so that nothing could be seen of the little journey from the railway-carriage to the palanquin. The Nawab stood close to the carriage, and when all possible precautions had been taken he gave his orders through the curtained window of the compartment, whereupon a barely perceptible movement on the part of the bearers as they braced themselves to carry a heavier load revealed the fact that a lady had stepped into the shrouded litter. The carriage door was quickly closed again, and yet another curtain was hung before it, and the palanquin, escorted by servants on either hand, proceeded, with its princely burden, to the other side of the platform, where three servants already stood by the open door of a reserved compartment, keeping inquisitive travellers at a distance. There again one saw the slight oscillation of the *palki* ;

the carriage door was slammed, and lo! the first cargo had been safely transhipped. This performance was gone through four times, and every time the steward of the household, with his tall staff, one end of which was adorned with a great silver knob, headed the little procession. The fourth lady was just a little too fat for the small sliding door of the palanquin, for it took her quite a long time to squeeze her way into the wooden box, and the bearers had to exert all their strength in order to hold the *palki* so close to the carriage door as to leave no interval between them. And on this trip the bearers' backs were bent lower than on the three previous journeys.

And now, the whole performance having been brought to a successful close, the engine began to shriek and roar and whistle. It is a curious fact that the third-class passengers on the Indian railways always become conscious of certain physical needs just as the train is about to start, so that at the last moment they clamber along the embankment and, turning their backs upon the train, peacefully squat down and relieve themselves. Only when the guard, shouting, scolding and threatening that he will start without them, begins to slam the doors, do they at last spring to their feet, wash their hands with the water in their *lotas*, wipe their mouths with the corners of their waist-cloths, and tumble into the train like so many school-children at play, who, after a protracted summons, finally obey their master and return to their desks.

I have a horror of the express trains that go roaring through the land from north to south and east to west, their passengers full of urgent affairs of a kind that the West, with all its plagues, has brought to this wonderful country. No, I prefer to make use of some little, loitering railway, such as we may find in some pocket-handkerchief State, where the locomotive wastes the greater part of its head of steam by blowing its whistle. The permanent way may be unevenly laid, and the walls of the compartments may be sprinkled with the red of betel-nut, while even the windows are barred like a parrot's cage; but the human beings who travel in them are all as good-natured, as carelessly merry, as children on a holiday.

And indeed, to the Hindu, every pilgrimage is a holiday journey. All that tied him to material existence is put away behind him; and before him is all the liberty and all the joy that life can hold. There they sit, squatting cross-legged on the benches of the third-class carriages, with their water-pipes standing on the floor before them, offering one another areca-nut or perhaps a quid of betel. And if one of the travellers should catch a passing glimpse amidst the dark-green foliage of the mango, of a little temple, bedecked with yellow flags, all a-flutter in the gentle breeze, he at once calls the attention of the rest to his discovery, and all of them stare through the windows as though it were the most beautiful temple in the world and as though such mango-trees had never been

seen before. And the little railway winds onward in such a delightfully leisurely fashion! and the little train snorts and groans and snores as though the engine were bubbling and thrilling with an inward joy and content. It was quite possible to converse, as the train proceeded, with the men standing amidst the growing crops of durra, and all the bronze-coloured faces wore such sunny smiles as one sorely misses in the low-lying districts, where the giant factory-chimneys rise into the sky, overcasting the blue of the heavens. Often our train crept onwards so slowly that the passengers could easily jump down on to the track, in order once more to apply themselves to the pleasant business of quenching their thirst. What merriment if the train moved on a little and the passengers had to run after it, shouting at the tops of their voices, in order to regain their compartments!

In the course of fifteen years in India I have seen many beautiful landscapes, from the Malabar coast to the snowfields of the Himalaya, but nowhere did I find such beauty, a beauty instinct with such blissful serenity, as on this journey from Baidyanath to Deoghar, and more especially round about Deoghar itself. The late afternoon sun was shining over the landscape, and the hills were covered with whitewashed country houses, surrounded by mango-trees and groves of tamarind. Here and there a "Forest Fire" broke into fiery blossom. In the fields the peasants and their wives were still at work, while mere babies were tending the black buffalo,

or were lying with their herd of goats in the shadow of a banyan; and all around us rose the giant peaks of the four-and-twenty Parganas, those remoter heights of the mountain range that hung, quivering, in the tender blue of the heavens.

When I arrived in Deoghar, Arun was already waiting for me in the little station. The servants took my luggage—it was little enough—one small sheet-iron trunk such as the travelling Bengali uses, containing a few waist-cloths, shirts and other necessities of travel. Arun looked as he always did, the very type of the aristocratic Hindu; his garments were neither better nor worse than the clothes of those about him, yet he seemed always to tower above them all. The way in which his cloak was wrapped about him was inimitable, yet he had merely thrown it over his shoulders. His waist-cloth fell to the ground, showing the broad golden border that marked the princely rank of the wearer. I noted that none of the many who thronged about the exit passed him without giving him an admiring glance.

A ten minutes' drive and we were at home in his bungalow, built in the heart of a garden where the roses were in bloom, full of the intoxicating odour of the oleander and of snow-white jasmin. The door by which we entered the bungalow was overhung by heavy blue clusters of flowers, and in the midst of the garden stood a eucalyptus. Arun's country house—and it must have been built some

hundreds of years ago—had almost the look of an old fortified manor. The ceilings of the rooms were vaulted, and the front wall of the house was built up higher than the roof and provided with a balustrade, so that one could stroll there in the cool of the evening. Behind the house lay the courtyard, with the servants' quarters, the kitchen and the bathroom. To the left a narrow staircase near the entrance led to the apartments of the princess. The reception-room, a sort of hall, two sides of which opened on to a verandah overgrown with climbing roses, was furnished in the old Hindu fashion; the walls were hung with carpets, and a few pictures of Arun's forefather's in warlike array, and in the middle of the room was a silver chandelier some three feet in height. But almost three-quarters of the room was taken up by the white-covered divan. A host of pillows and cushions lay scattered on every side. The greatest artistic treasure of Arun's house was an ancient water-clock.

Alas! the days when such ancient clocks told the hour to the princely courts of India have long gone by. It is not that they have been sold to the dealers in antiquities, but Occidental products are gradually destroying the Hindus' taste, and the venerable old water-clock and sand-clock are being ousted by the modern timepiece. The wealthy Indian surrounds himself, in his city house, in Bombay, Madras or Calcutta with all the paraphernalia of European comfort. I have often been compelled to admire

the most pitiful medley of wonderful Indian antiquities and imported European rubbish. But in the old family manors one may often still see the simple furnishings of bygone generations, and among them the ancient wall-clock, the *garhi*, to give it its Indian name: that is, the water-clock.

In Arun's house I now had the opportunity of examining a clock of this kind. It is not the kind of water-clock which is sometimes seen in Europe; it consists of a vase filled with water, on which floats a small copper vessel, in which a little hole is bored. Almost imperceptibly the water enters this copper float, which sinks when full. The time required to fill the float the Hindu denotes by the word *garhi*: that is, some twenty-two and a half minutes. The day of twenty-four hours is divided into eight periods of eight *garhi*: that is, eight periods of a hundred and eighty minutes, or three hours, each. As soon as a *garhi* has elapsed—that is, as soon as the float sinks to the bottom of the container—the servant appointed to attend to the clock strikes the time—strikes, on a copper plate or gong, the number of *garhis* that have passed. But the ancient water-clock, since it needs a specially appointed servant to look after it, is more expensive than any modern clock. The gong, then, is struck an increasing number of blows as the time wears on from grey dawn to noon. Day begins when the tiles on the roof can be counted, or when it is possible to distinguish the hairs on a human hand held up against the sky. After the midday hour the first

garhi announces the new series of intervals, which will continue until the sun goes down, when the numbering of the *garhis* begins again from zero.

I have found a similar clock in use in Nepal. In Burma such a timepiece is called a *nayi*; and there, too, after the lapse of every *nayi* a gong is struck; and after every third *nayi* the great drum-like gong on the tower of the time-teller in the courtyard of the palace. These strokes from the tower, the *paho*, are repeated by all the bells, great or small, in the various parts of the palace. The old men still tell of a time when the watchers of the clock, if they were negligent in fulfilling their duties, were beheaded in the public market-place. Nowadays the offender is merely punished by a deduction from his wages.

In many temples these clocks are so devised as to be of use in astronomical observations, and they are often covered with scientific symbols in Sanscrit letters. These clocks are most complicated in their construction and often require six to eight men to attend to them; four for the hours of daylight and as many for the nights, so that only the wealthiest temples could indulge in such a clock. But on solemn occasions—as at a wedding, for example—these old clocks are still employed, even to-day. The Brahmin brings the copper float, and the bridegroom attends to the clock. His duty it is to number the hours until the appointed time when he must enter the wedding-tent. Of recent years this

ancient apparatus has been replaced by the modern clock, or watch, although the officiating priest disapproves of the disappearance of the copper float, since he receives a fixed payment for providing it. A European traveller may still come upon such clocks in the temple of Venkatagari, and in the old courts of justice of the native States of the hinterland, far from the frantic bustle of European progress.

Deoghar is still a thoroughly Hindu city, in which the women of the upper castes, who in the capitals still observe the customs of the *purdanashin* in all their severity, wander through the streets unveiled and often even unescorted by their attendants. The European very seldom has the good fortune to meet a Hindu lady of superior caste face to face, so that his ideas of Hindu beauty are derived merely from the overdriven women of the people to be seen in the streets and bazaars. He is amazed by the sight of such divine beauty as takes his senses captive in Deoghar. There he will come to realize that the types of women described by Kalidassa and other Hindu poets are not creations of the poetic imagination, but are true to life. It made a curious impression upon me, as we strolled to and fro, on my first evening at Deoghar, past the blossom-covered country houses, to see Hindu ladies playing lawn-tennis in their thin, brightly coloured silken garments. This was a spectacle which, as yet, I had never witnessed.

Night fell, and we had to turn homeward, since Arun's friends and kinsfolk had been

invited to dinner. I have seldom found myself in a more stimulating society; it consisted of young men from Calcutta, some students and some youthful landowners, and we all sat on the open verandah after dinner, with betel and hookah, far into the small hours, one telling a story and another singing a song or playing some ancient melody on the *bhaja,* until it seemed to me as though I had been transported through the centuries to the age of classic Hindu culture. That one among the guests whom I liked above them all was a cousin of Arun's, by name Hemchandra, several years older than my friend; full of witty conceits, with the eyes of a merry sprite and a most infectious laugh. He was the tenth son of his father; a poor devil who, after many difficult examinations, would be obliged to seek, with the help of his wealthier relatives, some sort of administrative post. At one time he accepted a situation with a wealthy old zemindar, who was blessed with a very young wife. Hemchandra showed some reluctance to refer to this period, but he promised me to tell me of his adventure when we should find ourselves alone.

Next day was the day of that memorable excursion to Parasnath which I have already described in the first chapter. Only on the third day was my intense expectation gratified; I was to visit the temple of Deoghar, and what was more, I was to see it during the festival of Ganesha-Shatra.

The festival began, as usual, at nightfall, but

even during the afternoon the town was full of jostling swarms of people. The nearer we drew to the temple the more lively was the crowd. The holy place was on a slight eminence overlooking the city, and consisted of a number of temples which stood upon the circumference of a circle whose centre was the sanctuary proper, with its image of the Mahadeva.[1] The whole was surrounded by a lofty wall. The iron door, some nine feet in height, above which was a marble slab bearing the significant inscription: "Persons of other creeds strictly forbidden to enter," now stood wide open, and a dense crowd of worshippers was forcing its way across the threshold. On entering, we found ourselves in a large courtyard paved with flagstones. In the middle of the courtyard stood the sanctuary, a circular building some thirty feet in diameter, surmounted by a lofty marble dome. All round the building was a kind of terrace about a yard in width, on which the white-clad native women, thickly veiled, sat in the posture of prayer, with introspective gaze. They were imploring the Divinity to grant their most fervent desire: the longing for motherhood.

The door leading to the holy of holies is so low that one is forced to stoop on entering. Women and non-Brahmins were not allowed to approach the heart of the sanctuary. A few young priests, whom we had encountered while going the rounds of the outer temples, which are dedicated to the lesser gods, followed us inquisi-

[1] Siva, the supreme god of the Hindu pantheon.

tively to the door of the sanctuary, and one even entered with us. The interior of the sanctuary was lit with hanging lamps of bronze and two of silver, and into the crevices of the circular wall were thrust long sticks of incense. The *lingam*,[1] some six feet in height and three in width, stood in an oval basin of marble, which represented the female portion of the mystery. The *lingam* was carved out of a single block of marble, and the innumerable sacrifices of ghee,[2] which during the centuries had been brought thither by the priests and smeared upon the marble, had given the stone a look as though it were covered with a brown varnish. White and red flowers lay loose or were wreathed around the deity, falling about his feet. We prostrated ourselves before the godhead, as did all the other pilgrims, and touched the floor at the feet of the Mahadeva, greeting him with the cry of the devout worshipper: "Hari bol, Hari bol!" (Lord, bless us)! In a great copper basin was the money which the pious pilgrims had dropped into it as a sacrificial gift; from the modest cowrie-shell (forty-eight of which are equivalent to the

[1] The sexual life cannot be divorced from the Hindu creed, nor from its rites and ceremonies. In some of the larger temples in India I have even encountered male prostitutes. In the Hindu, as in almost all primitive peoples, sexual intercourse is the most important expression of the eternal energy and creative power of nature—the great mystery of life. Sex as such, with its natural functions, is a symbol of the unfathomable and eternally active Being. For this reason the *lingam* (or *phallus*) is the most universal and most venerated symbol of the god Siva. As a rule it is surrounded by a circle, a symbol of the female principle.

[2] Clarified butter.

smallest copper coin, a peisa[1]) to the silver rupee; and even a few gold mohurs gleamed in the midst of the bowl. The wall surrounding the Mahadeva was hung with sacrificial gifts of every sort, just as the walls of the lesser temples were decorated with them. All sorts of casts and figures were hung there, made of gold, silver, copper, bronze, clay and even wax, representing human beings, or their legs, arms, etc., and even cattle and other beasts, proving that even the pilgrim's prayers for the healing of his sick domestic animals had been heard and granted. One who visits the temple of Deoghar or any similar sanctuary, cannot avoid comparison with certain Roman Catholic places of pilgrimage.

Of a very different kind are the vows and the gifts which the Hindu brings thither in order to attain fulfilment of his desires. Not only does he fast and perform acts of penance which often border on the miraculous; he also endeavours to ensure the favour of the gods by every imaginable kind of vow. While the high-caste Hindu prefers rather to make his gods offerings of flowers and fruits, the native of inferior caste prefers to sacrifice domestic animals, such as hens, kids and sheep, or, in cases of great urgency, a whole village may even sacrifice a bullock. But the gods to whom such bloody gifts are offered are gods of lesser rank. The Hindu of superior caste bears his sacrificial gifts to the

[1] 1 rupee = 16 annas; 1 anna = 12 pice; 1 pice = 3 peise; 1 peisa = 48 cowries, the small white sea-shells which are strung like beads and suspended round the neck of the zebu or native ox.

Mahadeva of Deoghar, the Tirunarayana of Melkot, the Subramanaya of Palni, the Kali or Durgama of Calicut, the Viraraghava of Tiruvallur, or the god Venkateschwar at the same place. Hindu fathers often give their children the names of these gods in order to secure their favour. Only in very rare instances do they seek in this manner to appeal to the gods of lesser rank.

The Ganesha festival lasts ten days, and means, to the lower castes, very much what the Carnival means to us. In some localities the rejoicings assume such a character that women of the upper castes cannot show themselves in the streets. When a village or a country town does not possess a temple dedicated to the god Ganesha, a sort of leafy arbour is erected, and in it is placed a figure of loam or straw, to which the people bring their sacrificial gifts. The haughty Brahmin avoids this festival, and only in secret does he send thither hens, or sheep, or kine for sacrifice. The festival concludes with the burning of the image; though if there is a tank in the neighbourhood the idol is thrown into the water instead. During the festival the following ceremonial is commonly observed: A structure of bamboo in the form of a cart, decorated with many-coloured strips of paper, is borne through the streets on the heads of the bearers. One sees also paper houses with lanterns burning within them. The processions which are seen by night at this season, with their thousands of twinkling lights, present a scene of fairylike beauty.

No Hindu will enter a temple without bringing

some gift of fruits: commonly bananas or coco-nuts. Before every sanctuary, be it ever so homely, on the lonely country road or in some little village, or even in the splendid temples of the capital cities, one sees the empty shells of coco-nuts. Moreover, no Hindu will approach a native of rank without offering him a gift of fruit—commonly a gaily decorated lemon. In the same way European guests are on festive occasions offered presents of fruits and flowers. This custom has even been extended to the Christian festivals of Christmas and New Year's day. On these occasions one's own servants, together with those of one's friends, come bearing lemons and bananas in their hands, offering their cordial wishes for the future happiness of the recipients. In the vernacular this practice is described by the term *bäksheesh*. The English official is forbidden to receive presents, but this prohibition does not include fruits and flowers. However, those who wish to bribe or corrupt are quite capable of expressing their desires by means of such attentions. I have received bouquets of flowers in which there lay buried, like a sprig of forget-me-not, a blue cheque bearing the words "Bank of Bengal." The givers were students who had saved money or borrowed it from relatives in order to secure my favour at an approaching examination. And then there are Christmas gifts! . . . If the pilgrim who is under a vow cannot reach the appointed temple or place of pilgrimage by the appointed date, he will cut a lock of hair from his child's head, enclose it

in a suitable receptacle, and throw it into the offertory-box on his next visit to the temple. And if the Hindu is threatened with sickness, or any other great misfortune, he cuts off his own hair and offers it as a sacrifice to his god. Even among the Dravidians the belief prevails that the sacrifice of a lock of hair will set free the spirit of the dead, and obtain for it the favour of the deity whose office it is to determine its daily weal or woe. Even the widow, who crops her head on the death of her husband, is actuated largely by this belief. Among the Brahmin women of the South, however, vanity has prevailed over religion; the lock of hair which they cut off in order to present it to the gods is only a very small one.

During my wanderings I was often a witness of the pious veneration paid to milestones and boundary-posts; even in the city of Madras, so largely influenced by the West, there is, between the Women's Hospital and the Museum, a municipal boundary-post to which divine attributes are ascribed. The people believe that a spirit dwells in the banyan-tree hard by, which protects the hospital, and to which pregnant women, if they wish for an easy delivery, must bring their sacrifices. Every woman who enters the hospital towards the end of her confinement promises the stone a gift of fruit and flowers if all goes well on her delivery And any day one may see lately confined women making their thankofferings of fruit and flowers to the spirit indwelling in the stone.

On a certain journey, part of which I made in the company of certain Banjaras, one of the little zebu—oxen—which they use as pack-animals, fell sick; so they hung the little creature's bell upon a tree which they believed to be the home of a spirit, hoping that the sickness would be left behind with the bell. I was once driving with Govind along the road from Bagada to Keti when we passed a tree on which such a bell was suspended, and as there was no one in sight I wanted to remove it. Despite Govind's most urgent pleading that I would not incur the wrath of the god, I took it with me, and two days later one of my oxen broke its thigh in crossing a river. Govind was of course triumphant over this just punishment.

On the highway to Terupati the goddess Gantala Gangamma has her home in a margosa-tree, which is surrounded by a nest of white ants. Any wayfarer who passes this tree tears off a strip of his clothing, ties it to a twig and lays a stone upon the anthill. Often, too, the passing traveller will sacrifice a fowl and tie the head and legs of the sacrificed bird to the tree. In the Teluga country, on the East coast, I have even encountered a "scarecrow god"; the sacrifices offered to him consisted of rags which were tied to the boughs of the bulbul-tree (*Acasha arabica*) in order to obtain the god's protection and aid and to ensure a successful journey. A little farther south, in the neighbourhood of Tutticorin, I once saw a tree which was hung with the skulls, bones, horns and pads of various animals.

In Aligheri the Devastanan temple enshrines a deity who has a predilection for shoes. Yearly the god appears to four persons in four different parts of the surrounding district, and informs them, in a dream, that each of them must make him a shoe. Each of the persons thus chosen whitewashes his house, and proceeds to carry out the deity's commands, strewing the floor of his workshop with rice-flour. This done, the room is locked for the night, and in the morning there is found the print of a great foot, from which the measurements of the shoe are taken. When the shoe is completed, it is borne through the streets of the town in solemn procession and finally presented to the deity of the temple of Terupati. A *pujari*[1] certifies that all the shoes are of the same size and correctly paired, although the makers come from different parts of the country and are unknown to one another. The shoes are placed before the image of the god, and in course of time they actually, in some mysterious way, wear out. In Belur we may to this day witness the fulfilment of an ancient vow. The god of the temple, from time to time, visits his wife, on the hill of Baba-Budan, and in view of these visits a pair of slippers is always kept in his sanctuary. It is the privilege of the shoemakers of Channageri and Bismapatna to replace the worn-out shoes of the deity by new, and he never fails to remind them of their duties in dreams or waking apparitions. Although the shoemaker is a pariah and as such

[1] A priest especially appointed to supervise the daily sacrifice.

is forbidden to enter the temple, the Brahmins in this case relax the stringent prohibition to the extent of allowing him, as an exception, on this particular occasion, to enter the courtyard of the temple; but when he has left the temple the image of the god and the inside of the temple itself undergo a ceremonial purification at the hands of its Brahmin custodians. At the foot of the Anai-malai mountains is a sanctuary dedicated to the Trimurti,[1] surrounded by trees on which are suspended shoes of every size.

It not seldom happens that a place of pilgrimage is visited simultaneously by Hindus and Mohammedans; for example, the tomb of the Mohammedan saint Masthan Ali at Timmanchala. Every year, in the month of April, swarms of people may be encountered, travelling from places far distant, in order to attend the commemorative festival, and one beholding Moslem and Hindu united in common worship by this humble tomb might well believe that the enmity between the two great religious communities of India is less deep-rooted than is commonly believed in Europe. As a rule the female sex is the more numerous among these pilgrims, and on my own visits thither I have even seen Christian women, who, having failed to obtain what they desired from the saints of their own communion, hoped by this means to obtain the fulfilment of their prayer for motherhood. The sacrifices were offered alternately by *moulvis* and *pujaris*. In the market of Kilpati

[1] The Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva.

I bought, at a canvas-covered booth, certain small figures carved in wood, representing men and women in a condition of nudity, and my pupil, who accompanied me, explained that childless women perform on these figures the ceremony of piercing the ears, in the belief that thereby they will become fertile. Again, when a full-grown boy or girl dies unmarried, the parents solemnize a marriage between these wooden puppets, in the pious belief that the marriage of their child will be solemnized shortly afterwards. In "My India" I have described the ancient custom of swinging in fulfilment of a vow.

Now let us return, after this digression into the boundless province of national custom, with reference to the vows uttered and the pilgrimages made to Deoghar, whose significance will only now become apparent.

The sun had disappeared behind the dark blue banks of cloud; its last rays were growing faint, and the stars were peeping forth in the vast dome of the heavens, growing always brighter and clearer, until at length, when darkness had filled the whole sky, the silver-bright Milky Way shone forth in the heavens. From the city sounded the voices of many men, mingling with the din in the temple court, until the night seemed full of the roaring of breakers on a rocky shore. Pushed onward by the crowd, we wandered once more from one side temple to another. They were now brightly illuminated by countless oil lamps burning within them. On the tall iron stands before the images of the gods sticks of

incense were burning, giving off that sweet, slightly acrid odour peculiar to the Indian temple. On either side of the temple entrance stood canvas booths, such as one sees on days of sacrifice in Benares and other holy places, and in these booths rosaries were offered for sale, with amulets, talismans and images of the gods, great and small, and made of every imaginable material; some of them being most wonderfully worked, veritable masterpieces of the craft of the goldsmith and silversmith, while others were hideous and crudely-painted figures of clay and loam.

Denser and denser grew the throng, until only one corner of the courtyard showed an empty space; it was not fenced off, yet the crowd held back from it. There stood a naked *yogi*. At his feet lay a leopard-skin and a beggar's bowl filled with all sorts of grain. His body bore no signs or symbols and was not smeared with ashes, as is the custom with those who show themselves to the crowd in public temples. His hair was parted in the middle and fell below his shoulders; his face was, in colour, a dark bronze, with two of the mildest eyes I have ever seen; eyes that gazed over the heads of the crowd into a distance infinitely remote. We heard from those about us that he had already stood in that spot for four years and had never moved, even to rest or sleep. I have seen so many miracles on my travels that even this did not seem to me incredible.

As the darkness grew deeper the spectacle in the temple court became more and more marvellous. The booths were brightly lit with lamps

of every kind, and there was not a corner, not a parapet in the temple precincts, without its row of tiny lights—a tangle of endless lines of throbbing, twinkling points of light. Often it seemed as though the gentle night wind that flowed thither from the hills, sweeping over the city on its way to us, and bringing with it the odour of incense, was seeking to extinguish all these tiny lights. Now and then there came a moment's darkness, but a moment later the lights were all blazing as before. Thus the evening breeze likewise sported with the lights, sharing in the joy of gods and men. Here is the difference—and it is a difference of which in India one is constantly made aware—between the temple festivals of the Hindus and those of the Buddhists. While among the Buddhists practically every rite is performed by the priests alone, all the worshippers, even the children, partake in the religious festivals of the Hindu. Religion, and the religious life, with all its forms and ceremonies, is interwoven with the daily life of the Hindu from birth to death. The rites of religion are not, as with us, the exclusive privilege of the priesthood, and the solemn constraint so familiar in the churches of the Occident is wholly lacking in the Hindu sanctuaries. It was a sight never to be forgotten: the innumerable lights in every niche and corner of the temple, the medley of colours in the garments of the thronging crowd, and over all the glimmering, star-besprinkled heavens. The crowd entered into the rejoicings body and soul, filling the night with its shouts and

cries ; now and again some little urchin would run to a brazier, to rekindle an extinguished torch, or would pour fresh oil over its charred wick ; and if now and again a drop of burning oil fell upon one of the bare brown backs before him, there might be a brief outcry of indignation, but the high spirits of the crowd were an insurance against any serious breach of the peace.

It was perhaps ten o'clock before the actual festival began. The court of the sanctuary was now full to overflowing. Almost all the women wore the red *sari,* while their accurately parted, tightly strained hair, in which they wore red and white flowers, was glossy with fragrant oil. All were decked out in keeping with their fortune, and through all the din one heard the faint jingle of their silver anklets. Garlands of the leaves and flowers of the mango-tree were hung from shrine to shrine, finally ending in a lane of flowers at the entrance gate of the temple. From the interior of the temple there came a ringing of bells. The priests were still intoning their prayers before the Mahadeva. On either side of the entrance, seated on carpets, were the musicians, who began to play upon their ancient instruments when the Brahmins in the inner sanctuary had finished their prayers and offered their sacrifices. The melodies played may well have been heard at the temple festivals for centuries past, for in India nothing ever changes. Religious customs are still observed to-day just as they were five hundred years ago.

Then the ringing of the bells and the blowing

of conch-shells ceased, and the priests appeared before the door of the sanctuary. A moment's silence fell upon the thousands of worshippers; they drew back on either side, the right and the left, leaving an open lane. The priests were clad in white, with the upper part of the body naked; only the sacred five-fold cord, the sign of their priesthood, hung from the left shoulder, crossing over to the right hip. Four remained standing at the entrance of the temple, while the others passed through the crowd, their heads bowed as they traversed the courtyard to the entry, where they remained a short space of time.

All at once the cry was heard: "Mohunt![1] The High Priest!" The cry was taken up by voice after voice, until all were repeating it: "Mohunt! The High Priest!" The waiting Brahmins moved aside, right and left, and the High Priest appeared. He was arrayed like his colleagues, with a white waist-cloth and the five-fold cord across his chest. His face was partly hidden, since a white kerchief covered his mouth, lest he should breathe in the breath of the crowd. All that I could read upon his features was lust and greed, and my impression was afterwards fully confirmed. Despite his vow of sexual abstinence he was said to live a most abandoned life. The priests bowed low before him, and then fell into place beside and behind him. Passing along the pathway left by the crowd

[1] It is incumbent upon him to perform the first sacrifice of the day in the presence of the assembled priests, and as long as he continues to perform the appointed rites, no layman may enter the temple.

they re-entered the central sanctuary, a young priest following the Mohunt with a great fan of peacock feathers. In accordance with the sacred precepts, the High Priest must perforce prepare himself for the approaching festival by a two days' fast. As he slowly paced toward the temple with his escort, the foremost of them flung himself upon the ground before him, but they durst not even so much as touch his feet, or he would be defiled, and the festival could not take place. For the same reason his escort was careful to keep back the crowd of worshippers. At length the High Priest entered the sanctuary; the four Brahmins standing at the entry followed him, and then he alone offered the Mahadeva the sacrifice of light. At the end of some fifteen minutes the ceremony was completed; the bells and conch-shells were heard once more, while the crowd shouted in a deafening chorus: "Hari bol! Hari bol!" And now, again and again, one heard cries of "Govinda! Govinda!" The musicians laboured at their instruments with might and main, and there appeared to one side of the temple, winding their way through the crowd, a score or so of temple girls who took up their position behind the musicians. Deoghar, like all the more important temples and places of pilgrimage, has its *devadasi* or temple girls. They are attached to the temple, and are commonly the concubines of the priests. But they are not forbidden intercourse with other men not attached to the temple. It is only on the occasion of the official festivals that their presence is

obligatory; at other seasons they enjoy complete freedom. The *devadasi* enjoy much greater consideration than women of their caste and calling in European communities. I really cannot share the glowing enthusiasm of the traveller through India for the beauty of the *bayadère*; to me they seem to fall very far short of the highest criterion of feminine beauty. Most of them wear a peculiarly soulless expression which almost borders on imbecility. This may be partly due to the fact that Indian etiquette requires the Hindu woman to allow as little as possible of her inward feelings to appear. There are still younger *devadasi,* who look like children with the experience of old women, and to me the general effect of their dancing, which consists principally of obscene oscillations of the body, was more painful than delightful. The end of the *devadasi's* career is commonly this: if she has saved enough money she will open a disorderly house and become a procuress, or she will buy, with her savings, or with money provided by an old lover, a tobacco and betel shop. Deoghar is known throughout Bengal for the dissolute character of its priests, and I must admit that in all my wanderings I had never yet encountered so free-mannered a community of temple servants as at this place of pilgrimage. Moreover, its reputation was such that a Hindu woman of good family, on making the pilgrimage thither in fulfilment of a vow, is always accompanied by her husband. And the Mohunt had the worst reputation of them all.

At last the procession began to move, headed

by the musicians, behind whom came the temple girls, and then the priests, and after an interval of perhaps five paces came the Mohunt, bearing before him, like a monstrance, the veiled image of the god. As he made his way to the gate of exit, through the dense throng of worshippers, all hands were raised in prayer, and the star-spangled night rang with the name of the god-head. And so the procession, crossing the courtyard, made its way to the road without, proceeding downhill to the tank, which, like the temples, was all ablaze with thousands of lamps and torches.

Legend relates that in the days when the gods still lived among men, Hanuman, the monkey-god, made war upon the serpent-god and his innumerable host. The battle was long and bloody and the monkey-god was hard beset. In his need he called upon the mighty god Rama, who dwelt in the majestic heights of the ice-bound Himalaya. Rama, with his legions, hastened through the air in order to succour his favourite. But on the way he was overcome by physical necessity and came to earth. The place where he alighted is now known as Deoghar, and the tank that lies beneath the temple contains the water that he passed. The water in the tank works miracles, like the water in the tank of Bethesda, to which an angel descended in order to stir the waters with his staff. Any worshipper who has sacrificed in the temple and descends the steps leading to the tank, and bathes in its waters, will be cured of his sickness.

Against the lowest of the steps leading down to the tank, in which were mirrored the innumerable lights surrounding it, together with the stars that burned whitely overhead, lay a raft some twelve feet square, moored to two stakes and hung with tinselled stuffs of every kind and overhung by a canopy. Tiny lamps were burning along the edge of the raft, and paper lanterns hung from the uprights of the four corners. On the raft was a structure like a small altar. The Mohunt and four Brahmins stepped aboard the raft, two boys took their places by its farther edge, where they worked a sort of paddle, and the raft put out from the shore, moving towards the centre of the tank, accompanied by the shouted blessings of the innumerable crowd surrounding the tank. Having reached the centre of the tank the High Priest drew himself up, unveiled the little idol and raised it above his head as though blessing the surrounding throng. I was struck by his likeness to the Catholic priest in a brightly lit cathedral, raising the sacred monstrance. He then stooped down toward the surface of the water and allowed the idol to sink to the bottom. While he did so, thousands of throats gave utterance to the devout cry: "Hari bol! Hari bol! Lord, bless us! Lord, bless us!" When the image of the god had disappeared beneath the waters the raft returned to land. The High Priest came on shore, the crowd made way for him, and in the selfsame order as before the procession, followed by the crowd, slowly and solemnly ascended the steps on its

way back to the temple. Once again the Mohunt entered the sanctuary, once again offered the sacrifice of lamps, flowers and fruit, and in the open, before the sanctuary, the night was full of the ringing of bells and music, and then, surrounded by his escort, the Mohunt left the temple.

The festival was over. But not until long afterwards, in the small hours of the morning, did the worshippers leave the temple and return to their homes, or, if they were strangers, to one of the many *dharamsalams* (pilgrims' inns) conspicuous in every place of pilgrimage. As the last of them left we, too, quitted the sanctuary and went out on to the road, quietly strolling down the hill and through the city, with its narrow streets and alleys, and crossing the bazaar in the direction of our house. In front of the houses, whose shutters were closed, slumbering figures lay here and there, and in one corner was a little temple where a small oil lamp was still burning before the image of the divinity. Here crouched three homeless lepers, their faces veiled with tattered rags. In the east the grey light of the coming day was already visible. As we were passing the last houses of the city there came out of an alley the *kotwal* or night watchman ; an old, grey-bearded man, carrying a long bamboo staff, the wooden clogs on his feet ringing on the stone flags as though he were walking over a cavern. We were already beyond the limits of the city, on the road bordered on either side by villas standing in gardens full of heavy, fragrant flowers. In a bush by the wayside a bird, roused

from its sleep, fluttered its wings, and from far away in the night came the ghostly baying of a jackal. Just as we had almost reached our house we heard through the still night the voice of the old *kotwal*, and the morning breeze wafted his words plainly to our ears: *Siva Namashkar, tisra genta mara*—" The blessing of Siva upon you, the third hour has struck!"

Day broke; the sun shot its first golden rays through the little window in my bedroom. For a long time I lay awake, and in my mind's eye pictures of the bygone night followed one another in vivid alternation: the fanatical yogi, the glare and sparkle of the lights about the temple, and the eager, excited faces of the pious throng. Still in my ears rang the cry of the muezzin, calling the faithful to prayer, and the sonorous voice of the night watchman: *Siva Namashkar*—" The blessing of Siva upon you."

THE SWAMI

OF THE MANY PERSONS who have won a reputation for holiness in the province of Bengal was one who attracted us all greatly—the Swami Sri Devanand.[1] I had already made the personal acquaintance of this noble teacher; I had met him as he was returning, after a meeting of *gurus*, to his home in the wilderness, for on his way thither he spent a night in the remote little village which was, for a year, my home. On that occasion a most remarkable event impressed his personality indelibly upon my memory.

Night had fallen over the jungle, the cattle had been driven home to the village stockade, and the sickle of the new moon shone through the palm-trees that rose against the brighter background of the heavens like a finely cut silhouette, and the bulbul, the bird of a thousand songs, was sobbing forth its first notes into the night. In the village the women were singing in the melancholy treble of the Indian folk-song, ever and again accompanied by the sudden throbbing of the tom-tom. A light breeze, heavy with the scent of the jungle flowers, was stream-

[1] Sri is a title which the people confer only on the greatest scholars. Deva-anandi means: the beloved of God.

ing through the trees about my hut, when the Swami, accompanied by his pupil, appeared in the circle of light about the open fire which I had lit before my hermitage in order to cook the simple evening meal. So must the face of the Son of Man have hovered before Titian, a pale, olive-skinned face framed in coal-black hair and beard. The nose was purely Greek; the whole face was perfect in its proportions; the upper part of the body was naked and displayed no sign whatever of social rank or sectarian category; the yellow waist-cloth reached to his ankles and on his feet he wore wooden sandals. At his side hung the gourd-shell of the mendicant monk, and in his hand was a bamboo staff. "Peace be with thee!" he said, and at my invitation seated himself beside me.

The ancient precepts command the Sanyassin, on his wanderings, to sleep only under the open sky, and to accept from the faithful only so much as is necessary for the barest needs of the day. So, when the monk and his disciple, on passing through the village, saw the light before my hut, they came to me as a matter of course. While the *chela* constructed a temporary hearth and kindled a fire, he told me, in sonorous tones, whence he came and whither he was going. His name was better known to the villagers than to me, and hardly an hour had gone by when I saw, through the trees, the glimmer of tiny lights. These were the torches of some of the villagers, coming to greet the Master, and listen to his teaching. Others followed them, and late into

the night there were perhaps a score of men seated round the fire. Although the Swami was obviously wearied by his long day's journey, and had as yet taken no food, he cheerfully answered all their questions. But at last the questions ceased, for the villagers, on hearing that the Teacher had arrived, had left their houses without thinking of their own suppers; and then something happened that many will assign to the world of miracles and fairy tales. The Teacher knew that none of those who were hanging upon his words had as yet eaten, and in princely fashion, as one who has only to command and straightway food is provided, he said: "Stay here and eat." The pot which the *chela* had placed upon the fire contained only a couple of handfuls of rice and *dahl* (lentils)—scarcely enough to satisfy two. But those present manifested no surprise; they stood there like obedient children, and, going up to the trees, they plucked from them leaves as big as a man's hand, and in a few minutes, with the aid of a few twigs, they had fastened them together, making little plates and dishes. Now the monk rose to his feet and placed some of the contents of the little pot on the improvised plate of each of his visitors. The third or fourth helping should most certainly have emptied the pot, but the Swami continued to distribute the food, until he had served the last comer, when he helped himself and his *chela*, and all fell to eating, including myself, and it seemed to me that I was the only one present to be surprised by the miracle. Whether this

was the result of the monk's hypnotic abilities, or the effect of some superhuman power, such as we read of in the Bible, I will not attempt to discuss. In any case, I saw the thing with my own eyes.

Next morning the Swami left us. I went with him as far as the military road which was built centuries ago by the Moguls, and is still, even to-day, the great line of communication for that part of India, being thousands of miles in length from north to south.

Arun, late one night in the garden of his Calcutta house, told me another no less marvellous tale of this Swami, and one likewise reminiscent of the miracles of the New Testament. Arun was no prince by birth; like David, he tended his father's kine in his native village, far removed from the great world. One evening, as he was driving homewards a herd of black buffalo, he was met, on the outskirts of the village, by a native lady, magnificently attired. Her servants and her luggage were under canvas at a distance of some hundred yards. The lady was none other than the queen Haikpara; she was childless, yet before his death the Rajah had given her full powers to nominate a successor to the throne and to adopt a son. Arun's native village lay in the Rajah's dominions. She discovered the village accidently, when driving through it. Never yet had Arun seen so magnificent a being. The queen took a fancy to the ten-year old boy. She had some little conversation with him and then went with him to his

father's house. Next morning father and son left their native village in the company of the Ranee, and when they arrived in Calcutta an amazing thing came to pass: the house-priest and the astrologer greeted the former herd-boy, who nervously clung to his father's hand, before the Ranee entered, with the words: "Long life to the king!"

Two years before this happened, Arun's father, accompanied by Arun himself—who was then only eight years old—made a pilgrimage to Benares, at the same time visiting the grove of trees in which our Swami was then to be found. The three had not previously met, nor had the Rajah of Haikpara then made a will in favour of his consort. As the two threw themselves down before the Swami, who was absorbed in profound meditation, the holy man at once opened his eyes, laid his hand upon the boy's head and spoke these words: *Namaschkar Kumar Bahadur*—"Hail to thee, son of a king!"

The boy forgot the Swami's words, but the father hid them in his heart, not asking why they were spoken nor whither they came, yet confidently believing that they would one day be fulfilled, for the ways of Karma are mysterious.

I was to see this remarkable individual yet again, during the few following days.

Surrounding the city, set high against the tender blue of the heavens, is the misty range of mountains known as the Santal-Parganas. No single peak is there that rises predominant over the rest. Stupendous masses of rock, their

corners rounded as in some titanic glacier-mill, are piled one upon another in disorderly fashion, though they never lose a certain strange beauty and harmony; the mighty memorials of the prehistoric achievements of Nature. There was a time when the world of ice stretched from the Himalayas to the high plains of the Deccan, and even into Southern India, and when the reluctant glaciers retreated northwards these masses of rock were left behind. On their summits to-day stand little temples, above which flutter white and yellow flags. Here and there, in clefts or sheltered hollows, concealed in the green thickets of bamboo, surrounded by tiny gardens, are the hermitages and monasteries of the yogis. In one of these hollows lived the Swami who was the object of our excursion, a little withdrawn from the rest of his colleagues—a dozen perhaps in number—who lived not far away at the entrance to the ravine.

The track that winds among these hills passes through one of the most beautiful stretches of country that all Bengal can offer. Leaving behind him the little Sontali village, the traveller crosses a field of maize and suddenly finds himself in a dense jungle, which, as it climbs the mountain-side, gradually gives place to the forest. The trees grow so close that their interwoven boughs form a gigantic roof under which the path becomes a shady, covered alley, leading almost to the summit of the rock. From amidst the dense foliage the parrots scream and chatter, or the grey doves flutter forth, while myriads of crickets

shrill their deafening and unceasing song. Black- and white-striped squirrels slip across the path or spring in tremendous leaps from tree to tree. The ground is covered with leaves and gives forth that odour which is peculiar to the jungle, and which, once inhaled, can never be forgotten; the breath of the jungle, as we used to call it. From the crevices in the rocks grow clumps of bamboo, the thin, sharp-edged blades of their foliage leaning across the track. Walking along the jungle path is a tiring business, for the loose stones, covered with bamboo leaves, are slippery as ice. Often enough a snake lies hidden amidst the leaves, not to be detected by the casual glance. A little higher up a rivulet, crystal-clear, leaping across a mass of rock, shatters itself on the granite boulders into a million sparkling diamonds, and where it has moistened the soil is a growth of flowers wonderful for their scent and their blaze of colour. But then the rivulet, slipping behind another rock, flows through some mysterious subterranean channel and is not seen again until it has reached a point far out on the plain below.

After a climb of two hours or so one reaches a little plateau, surrounded by lofty spires of rock; on every side it is hemmed in by shady trees; only toward the south can one look out over the plain, as far as the city of Deoghar, and between the hills and the city the huts of the Sontali village peer forth amidst the dark-green foliage. Over the whole countryside, on the day of which I write, lay the burning heat of early afternoon, so that the trees and plants, and even the silver

threads of the rivulet, danced in the quivering ether as though the whole were a Fata Morgana, a magic picture, imagined rather than seen.

The Swami's hermitage, built with his own hands and surrounded by a little garden, was just a hut, made of palm leaves, with a roof of moss. The front of the hut was open, so that the inside was plainly visible. In the right-hand corner was a raised platform of clay, fashioned in the shape of a horseshoe. This was the hearth. From a peg on the opposite wall hung a short yellow wrap and the alms-bowl of the mendicant monk, and on the left was a rolled-up rush mat, the Swami's bed. The only article of luxury, so to speak, in the hut was a leopard-skin, outspread upon the floor, on which the Indian *yogis,* in accordance with ancient custom, seat themselves during their meditations. To me it was like a miracle to find the exquisite garden flowers of the plain in this wild spot. Jasmin and mimosa overran the roof, and the garden fence consisted of oleander. Beyond the hut a few small rose-bushes were growing in sunken beds, and behind it a spring ran splashing out of a crevice in the rock, a rivulet of shimmering silver, and beside it, in a small enclosure, was a doe, which retreated timidly to one corner as we drew near.

The sun was slowly leaving the valley as we reached the summit, for we had spent some time in the little monastery that owned the Swami as its Father Superior. The smoke of the villages below us rose here and there, in floating spirals, above the groves of trees, slowly dis-

solving into the deep blue of the approaching night. Across the fields that already lay in shadow the herds of kine were moving homewards to their villages, driven by little boys who in the distance looked like tiny gnomes or pigmies. Slowly and softly, but gradually becoming darker, the veils of night were drawn about the heavens and outspread over the plain, and only in the west did the heavens, in one last effort, put forth their utmost splendour in taking their leave of the sun. But who can hope to describe such a spectacle: the last sight of the quivering sun, its blood-red ball looming above the rim of the jungle, the dazzling blaze of yellow fire shining upon and through the level strata or the jagged peaks of cloudland! What words can we find wherewith to picture the whole infinite range of colour, blazing forth and fading into darkness in the space of a few minutes! . . . It is as though all things that have their being in the jungle are on tiptoe to witness this daily repeated miracle. All Nature seems to hold its breath. Even the grasshoppers are silent, and the gentle airs that herald the approaching night, flowing through the trees on their mysterious errands, cease their flight, and the leaves, lately rustling in the breath of evening, now hang motionless from the boughs. Slowly the fires of heaven pale and wane; the last shafts of the sun, the last fires of the afterglow, and on the cloak of night the first white stars appear. . . .

Suddenly, the Swami emerged from the darkness beneath the trees, advancing into the twi-

light of the clearing. So may he have appeared who once, on the banks of the Jordan, announced the coming of his Lord and Master: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!" His pale face, which reminded one of some Old Testament prophet, revealing barely perceptible traces of suffering, was transfigured in the evening light by an expression of more than earthly peace.

As a rule he did not speak for any great length of time. But before I describe our conversation with him I had best say a few words in general concerning the *guru* or "Teacher."

The *gurus* are to be found all over India, but they lead a life apart, and seldom come into contact with Western influences. The wear and tear and confusion of the present age, which drives the soul ever farther and farther from its divine goal, passes over them almost without leaving a trace. For many centuries the *gurus* have belonged to one of two great schools: the South Indian and the Himalayan. The South Indian school has on the whole maintained the traditions of the Brahmins, but the Himalayan school is based rather on the democratic traditions of the Buddha, although it does not pay much attention to the present-day discipline of the Buddhist monastery. The line of cleavage naturally extends to philosophical contemplation, and petty scholastic disputes are at present the order of the day, and yet, if we look into the matter, the difference between the schools is only superficial.

Our Swami belonged to the school of Southern

India. As we were sitting beside him, on the evening in question, a number of other yogis came from the scattered hermitages round about, in order to listen to his teaching, as was their custom. For a long time he sat before us in silence, with closed eyes, sunk in the profoundest contemplation. Then his features assumed that spiritual expression which is only to be seen on the face of a truly devout priest. He gazed at his disciples with the distant, abstracted gaze of the seer, and then began to speak, in musical and sonorous tones, as simply as a child, yet "as one having authority." For two hours he spoke, and only twice was he interrupted by his attentive hearers. His speech was fluent, sometimes expressing a certain degree of emotion, and always rich in appropriate images, full of allusions and precedents from the ancient classics; and always, in spite of many digressions, finding its way back to its starting-point. His address contained a surprising wealth of ideas and epigrammatic phrases, such as one might expect in a man who for years has listened undisturbed to the voice of his private conscience. Here again we perceive, in the method of teaching, and in the thing taught, the stupendous difference between East and West. In the East the method is, in essentials, authoritative and traditional, while in the West, whether complete or in embryo, it is individual in quality and proceeds by means of research. The scholar never questions the statements of his *guru*, and the *guru* makes no attempt to prove his thesis to the pupil. He

teaches what he himself was taught in his youth, and what he has recognized, since then, in the light of his own experience, to be the truth. The mode in which he hands on what he himself has inherited may be his own, but the accepted facts which he teaches are traditional, and have come down to him through the centuries. Independent judgment plays practically no part in the mental equipment of the Indian teacher. What he offers is of such a kind as to call neither for investigation nor for revision; he is concerned rather with the perception of the basic facts of the Universe, which require no research into the nature of the human mind. The West questions every new item of knowledge, and conceives of repose merely as the recurrence of perpetual movement, whereas the East offers man, in the place of recognized facts, a loftier perception, which to him is eternally true and eternally unchanged, as a key which opens all the secret chambers of life. It is not worth while to inquire more closely into the various methods of teaching employed by the yogi. In general, all Hindu teachers are agreed in this: that there are three stages by means of which the *gnanam* or divine perception may be acquired:

1. The study of the sacred books.
2. The guidance of a teacher.
3. The realization of the traditional in one's own life.

The first two, without the third, are aimless and only assist the teacher to prepare his disciples for personal experience. The sacred books contain

all the experience and intuitive wisdom of the great Teacher, but only now and again do they explain the " How " of it all—that is, the means by which such a state of illumination is attained. All will admit that this " How " is of the very stuff of evolution, and that on this account it would not be fitting to give every disciple the same instruction; indeed, it would be hardly possible to do so, since the teacher must employ different methods in accordance with the individual character and the degree of maturity displayed by the pupil.

It sometimes happens, though not very often, that a man will attain the state of *gnanam* by self-development, without the aid of a teacher. Nevertheless, it is the rule that the adept is initiated by another adept, just as this other was in turn taught by some older initiate, forming links of a chain that is lost to sight in the grey mist of the prehistoric ages. By the strictest self-discipline and the practices of the ascetic the yogi is undoubtedly able to acquire powers that exceed the ordinary measure of human capacity. But to the genuine yogi such powers are only a means to an end; never, as with the fakir, the end itself. The yogi's aim is simply union with the universal " I " in whom we live and labour and have our being.

It is foolish to expect a man gifted with exceptional capacities of any kind absolutely to withdraw himself from our human sphere, at the same time entering into a supramundane universe in the full possession of all the powers and

capacities of this new transcendental world. We are too ready to demand that a clairvoyant shall see all that exists, and that one who has worked a miracle shall constantly repeat the performance. Such generalization is an error into which we are all liable to fall; yet we should certainly protest, with reference to ourselves, that no one can hope to attain a higher stage of consciousness save by a long course of development and many protracted intervals of repose. The consciousness of the human race, with its moral conceptions and sensations, as they exist to-day, has developed only by short stages. Our Occidental consciousness is based upon the difference between the mind that knows and the thing known. The mind creates the world in an eternal duality: the World and the Ego. When all things temporal have fallen away from us there remains a kind of consciousness, the "self-ego," in which the difference between the ego and the universe, between object and subject, disappears, and this consciousness has been the goal of all yogis, from the dawn of time down to the present day. The way thither is long and tedious. When we are confronted with a man who has already surmounted some part of this steep and difficult path, we should not regard him with amazement, as a being from another world. History, for example, and theosophy, afford us many examples in which the stupendous and newly acquired powers won by such spiritual and ascetic discipline have been exploited in order to perpetrate a common fraud.

It is natural to suppose that men of the highest moral character must find it easier than others to attain to such extraordinary powers; but that this is not the case is especially emphasized by the occult doctrine of the Upanishad. We know of cases where persons whose moral character was anything but exalted succeeded in acquiring such faculties. I need only refer the reader to Madame Blavatzki! These faculties do not seem to be so much the result of moral education as of long practice and development: in short, of careful training.

The category of consciousness finally attained by the yogi is the universal or world-consciousness as opposed to the individual or physical consciousness, which we all possess and understand. This cosmic consciousness is defined in the Yoga-sutra as "Sat-Chit-Ananda." *Sat* signifies the all-permeating reality; *Chit* that which perceives and apprehends; while *Ananda* means "the blessed one" Here again we have the essential difference between East and West. The West seeks and demands the individual consciousness; its spiritual enrichment, the strengthening of its memory and its powers of perception. The East aims at an "All-consciousness," at union with the "All-ego," at absorption into the cosmic whole, and before this All-ego the pitiful individual consciousness disappears as morning mists before the sun. Only to him whose aim is self-forgetfulness is revealed the splendour indwelling beneath the world of material perception.

But how is man to obtain this union with the

universal consciousness, this state of the greatest possible happiness?

In order to attain to this condition he must divorce himself from his own body, must pass into the condition of conscious ecstasy, when he becomes the thing which he feels, sees and hears.

There are four essential stages by means of which this goal may be attained:

1. Initiation by a *guru*.

2. "*Arul*": the consciousness of grace working within us.

3. The contemplation of God.

4. The discovery of the universe within the ego. ("If the sage examines his ideas he feels that he is part of that absolute consciousness which is known as *sarva-sakshi*, the witness of all things.")

The fourth dimension plays a great part in the doctrine of the yogi, and it is a fact that the acceptance of the theory that there are not three but four dimensions explains many otherwise inexplicable phenomena; for example, that a physical connection may exist between persons who are to all outward seeming separated by considerable distances, and that objects which appear to be remote are in reality quite close to us, and that a man may pass in and out through a locked door. The fourth dimension is for many of the Indian *gnanis* [1] a matter of actual fact. So it was for our Swami. With an impressive gesture he told us of the fourth dimension. "The proper attribute of the soul," he said, "is that of

[1] The *gnanam* is a "knower," the highest rank in the spiritual hierarchy.

space, whereby it is omnipresent; but this space within the soul surpasses the ordinary space perceived by the human senses; sun, moon and stars are merely names of mental conceptions; in themselves they are no more than grains of dust." And as he said this he picked up a few grains of dust with two fingers of his right hand, and with an inimitable gesture cast them from him.

One thing that every yogi must learn is the "extinction of thought." Of all the exercises practised by the yogi this is the most difficult, and, indeed, to the European it seems hardly possible that a single moment of his short waking life could be passed without thought. But what a wealth of happiness, what blessedness resides in these words, "the extinction of thought!" Goethe must assuredly have had some foreboding of this phenomenon when he said, in one of his most delightful poems: "Ich ging im Walde so für mich hin, und nichts zu Suchen, das war mein Sinn."—"So I went into the forest, my purpose being to seek only my own soul." Even the Occidental mind might learn, from the universally "little" and the universally "great," to wander through the forest of phenomena in order to seek . . . nothing. The "extinction of thought" is neither "a sleep nor a forgetting," nor insensibility to externalities; but a complete and conscious liberation from all ideas.

Whatever men may think to-day of the reality of this state of mind, in which the man whose inmost mind has become deaf and blind to all that proceeds from the sensual outer world,

immersing his soul in the Eternal Being, feeling himself to be at one with the "Universal Ego," may truly say, giving to the words "I am" a significance beyond all speech, such as was once heard in the voice from the burning bush that spoke to the shepherd of Israel: "I Am That I Am. . . ." The fact is that this immersion has for centuries been the aim of all Hindu teachers. What an unspeakable blessing would it not have been for us, overburdened, hunted, tormented by our thoughts, pursued in the darkness of the night by phantoms of our own creation, by the shadows of our own conceptions, had we been taught this wisdom in our schooldays, that there is for all of us a refuge for the soul, a true repose, in this extinction of thought! We pride ourselves upon our great achievements in every department of science, technical skill and art. We are proud of our wireless telegraphy, of our conquest of the air; we have bitted and bridled Nature, and made her our slave, and we ourselves have become the most pitiful slaves of our own ideas. They fasten upon us like the shadow of death and harry us as though we were hunted beasts at bay, and yet we know of no means whereby to banish them. This is one of the most essential lessons of the *gnanam*: that man's powers of thought must be applied, with all his bodily and spiritual energies, to the work that is his daily duty; but that when he has done his work he should be able, with equal energy, to devote his body and soul to repose. The human thinker turns back, so to speak, to that inmost portion

of his inmost consciousness wherein dwells his true self, his individual "I." This subjection of thought to the will of the thinker is, as a matter of course, accompanied by the subjection of all his desires and purposes.

It sounded curious to us that evening, when the Swami, speaking in his sermon of the powers of Nature—of thunder and lightning, and the blazing sun—employed the pronoun "I." In this "I" was expressed the fact that he felt himself to be at one with the great "Universal Ego."

He then spoke at some length of the meaning of this "I." He who has known this "I" is in possession of the one great secret. How often have I, here in Europe, been led to meditate upon this word! Who has taught us the significance of this "I"? Who has entreated us to lay it to our hearts that only he is good who is conscious of his divine descent; who knows that he is one with the great "All I"; knows that he can never forget his divine origin or his divine destination, and must always, in his behaviour, be worthy of this divine relationship?

He who possesses this divine knowledge no longer perceives any difference between man and beast or good and evil.

One day, as our Swami was going down to the little Sontali village at the foot of the hill, he met a lame, mangy pariah dog. He took him on his shoulders and carried him to the nearest hut, where he washed him and cared for him. Who, hearing this, could fail to be reminded of the Good Shepherd? On another occasion, when a

few young Brahmins were plaguing him with would-be witty questions as to what he considered the best way to attain Nirvana, he rose, silently, and went with them to the ditch that divides the Brahmin village from the "caste-less," which, like all the ditches in the village, was filled with garbage. He then turned to the young men, saying, "Follow me!" And he stepped down into the ditch and out on the other side; but none of them followed him. When later on his son begged him to accept him as novice, he set him the same example, and the youth obediently followed him.

The teacher had been addressing us for more than two hours, but as yet he showed no signs of fatigue. But when his audience had departed he collapsed, exhausted and inert. He closed his eyes, and was to all appearances dead to the outer world, divorced from all about him, men and things alike.

It was midnight when, accompanied by two *sanyassin,* we climbed the summit of the hill, on which a small temple stood. There they showed us the tomb in which the Swami, a month earlier, had been immured for sixteen days. In the innermost sanctuary, behind the Mahadeva, was a thick wooden trap-door. Ten deep steps cut out of the rock led to a cellar some six or seven feet in height and about ten feet square. In the cellar another trap-door and ten more steps led to a second cellar of like dimensions. In one of the walls was a recess just large enough to receive a human body. Before it lay a great

slab of stone, the edges of which bore traces of the mortar with which the joints had been sealed. In this recess the Swami had lain for three weeks, to all appearances dead. When the slab had been set in its place and all the crevices sealed, the air contained in the cavity would not have been sufficient to enable a man to breathe even for an hour. I had often heard of such living burials but had never yet seen such a tomb. It is quite a mistake to suppose that the yogi allows himself to be buried as a pious exercise, or from the baser motive of achieving fame. This miracle, like many others which we regard with astonishment, is, for the yogi himself, a sort of test, in order to discover how far he has succeeded in establishing the mastery of spirit over flesh. Our guides told us that the Swami spent the greater part of the day in profound meditation, often remaining for hours motionless and lifeless as a statue, or else wandering into the forest. He would eat only twice in the week, and he never slept for more than two or three hours. In spite of this he possessed an almost monstrous power over his sensory organs. I paid him one more visit, but he did not seem to be aware of my presence. Now and again his lips parted and he murmured the words: "Sandosham—Sandosham. . . . Joy. . . . Joy. . . ." For this is the final aim of every holy teacher—"Joy and good fortune!" A joy that exceeds aught that can be expressed in words: that profound immersion in and union with the All-Soul, the only true, the highest happiness!

It was past midnight when we descended the steep rocky path between the black, stupendous masses of rock, accompanied by a youthful *chela,* who carried a torch.

Above us and on either side of us twinkled the eternal stars; now and again there was a mysterious rustling in the bushes and undergrowth beside the track, and in the light breeze the leaves of the bamboo thickets whispered their dreamy song of wondrous peace.

Down below, at the edge of a maize field, the tonga was waiting for us. The driver had lit a fire, and the bullocks were tethered to a clump of aloes. The beasts were lying down, munching at the bundle of fodder which had been strewn on the ground before them, and beside the fire lay the *hasiar,* sleeping the sleep of the just, rolled up like a mummy in his brown woollen blanket.

Silently we drove homeward along the dusty highway. All about us was profoundly still; the silence was broken only by the fluttering wings of a startled dove, beating against the leaves of the undergrowth, and the slight jingle of the shells and brass chains about the necks of the briskly trotting little bullocks. The driver, who was humming a song, now and again turned round in order to see whether we were sleeping, for neither of us uttered a sound. We were both too profoundly impressed by what we had seen and heard. As for me, I felt as though I had been bewitched, as though I were no longer a man of the twentieth century, but an inhabitant rather of that remote past whose child the Swami was.

MALKA

THAT PART OF THE CITY of Calcutta to which my memories lead me back to-day is little known, if at all, even to the oldest inhabitants of the capital. Nowhere do poverty, vice and crime live so close to one another as in the Chinese quarter of Calcutta. If we go down the magnificent Gowinghee Street, which before all others has won for Calcutta the title of the City of Palaces, and leave it near the Bristol Hotel, and then proceed a little way along the Dhorumtollat Street, we shall find ourselves, on taking the fourth turning, in the true native quarter of Calcutta. The houses, three or four storeys in height, have balconies at almost every window, and steep, rickety staircases; while on the ground floor are the shops of the shoemakers, tailors and tinkers, with now and then a pastrycook's, from which odours of boiling lard and sugar proceed; and now and again we pass a little temple, rarely more than a yard in breadth and width, with smoking candles and sticks of incense arrayed before the uncouth deity. The streets are densely packed with people from every part of the province, and indeed, from every part of India. Even Chinese will be found here, working in the street itself —making, for the most part, shoes and articles

of wicker-work—or in some half-lit room that serves both as shop-window and as workshop.

From this street a short, narrow, evil-smelling alley leads into the Chinese quarter. At the entrance stands a large whitewashed building, the police-station, with which I am already familiar; and I am also acquainted with the resident Inspector, whose actual name I have good reason for not divulging. We will call him Macnaughten. The *thana* (police-station) is surrounded by a brick wall some ten or twelve feet in height. Crossing the courtyard, one first of all enters the Inspector's office. Facing the door of this room is another door which leads to the cells, and to the right of these is a large room in which twenty to twenty-five policemen are to be found.

Macnaughten was not fundamentally heartless. Like many others, he had become accustomed to the system, and treated the prisoners brought before him with a sort of brutal joviality. One evening, about nine o'clock, I called for him, in order to take a stroll with him through the darkest portion of his ward. I had to wait some little time, since he had to attend to several "urgent cases." I sat at the table on his right and looked on at the scene before me. In one case a theft had been committed and only a single culprit could possibly have been suspected of the crime. However, the *peons* had immediately arrested, at random, half a dozen of their nearest neighbours and dragged them away. I shall never forget how the prisoners flung them-

selves on the ground, pleading, with loud lamentations, for mercy and compassion. The Inspector, however, appeared to be quite unmoved by their tears and gestures, and his answer was always the same: "All right, brothers! Don't distress yourselves! We shall see how things are to-morrow!" For that night, in any case, one and all were led away, and each was locked into a cell. The impecunious Hindu—poor devil—dreads nothing so much as a visit to the police-station, since for him arrest means misery and martyrdom. Macnaughten had frankly informed me that if the prisoners were not subjected to a certain amount of torture, one would never, to all eternity, get a word out of them. Here one man was wanted, and six were subjected to a night of torment, with the result that almost all of them, merely to escape further blows from the bamboo staff of the law, confessed to the theft. I have heard from other sources of even harsher methods, but have never witnessed their application.—The last case on the list was that of a poor woman. A tattered *brasseur* covered her shrunken breasts. Her iron-grey hair hung in a tangle about her head; her eyes were dim and had a curious veiled appearance, and her waist-cloth fell only to her knee. She was a widow, and had killed her child a few days before. When she saw that the police were on her track, she took what money she had—a few annas—and bought some opium wherewith to kill herself. But just as she was entering her miserable hut with the

poison she was seen by the police, and arrested. Even Macnaughten apparently felt something like compassion, for he told me that he wished the woman had not been arrested in his ward. While he went upstairs to the first floor, where he had his private quarters, I paid a visit to the cells, in order to exchange a few words with the prisoners (a quite particular favour), and perhaps to find some way of helping one or another. I can think of nothing more horrible than the prisoners' cells at an Indian police-station. Even at the little police-court, if the prisoners are removed during an interval they are taken back to dungeons of this sort. The front of the cell is open; the grill very often consists only of stout bamboos, behind which the wretched prisoner sits like a wild beast in a cage. Whenever I visit a zoological gardens, and come to a standstill before the cage of a lion or a tiger, accustomed to breathe the free air of heaven, and to lord it over miles upon miles of jungle, and note how they pace to and fro behind the bars, in dull despair, gazing out at the free world with eyes full of a deadly weariness, the picture rises before me of these poor fellows out in India, who, having fallen into the hands of the law, are being tortured by cruel and vicious men: "Sahib, Sahib, help us!" they cry. One of them speaks to me, but his speech is broken by sobs that seem to rise from his very heart: "Sahib, I have a wife and a child at home, and they don't know where I am, and I am their only support; help me to get away from here!

Look! "—and he shows me the scars of the blows that he has received, that he might be brought to a more reasonable frame of mind. "Sahib, it is killing me!" What could I do but promise him that I would see his wife and child, and ensure them at least against starvation, until his innocence should be proved and he himself set free?

As I was leaving the cells, my heart filled with compassion by what I had seen and heard, I found the Inspector waiting for me. He told the sergeant where he could be found in case of need, and we then left the station, turning aside down the dark alley that led to the Chinese quarter. At the very entrance to Chinatown we came upon a fair-sized house. The front steps were lighted by an oil-lantern with a gaily-painted glass shade. A steep staircase led to the first floor. The first room we entered was delightful. The walls were covered with mirrors, and those peculiar pictures which one often sees in native shops, pictures of Indian divinities, or even landscapes, built up with scraps of glittering, many-coloured tinsels. From the ceiling hung brightly-coloured lamps and glass balls, such as in Europe are used to adorn a Christmas-tree. On the ground, along the walls, lay white-covered cushions, and in the middle of the room stood a silver water-pipe, or hookah, perhaps two feet in height, and beside it a small silver box for betel-nut, with its numerous compartments for the various condiments which are necessary for the preparation

of the quid. The maidservant who opened the door for us disappeared the moment she had done so, so that we found ourselves alone, save for the owner of the house. She was a young woman of amazing loveliness, with black gazelle-like eyes and a nose whose beauty no sculptor could have hoped to rival. She wore a white silken *sari*, with a border of gold as broad as one's finger. In her hair was entwined a sprig of jasmin in flower, and a gold chain was hung round her neck. Her complexion was of that soft, golden shade which one often sees in the Jewesses of Bagdad or the women of Cashmir. Her voice was like a bell, soft and clear. She was the Inspector's mistress. I knew enough of the finances of Anglo-Indian officialdom to realize that Macnaughten's expenditure could not be reconciled with his pay. He kept a dog-cart, and entertained profusely, and his "girl" must have cost him at least two hundred rupees a month. Moreover, he had two boys who were attending one of the best schools in Calcutta, and a fairly extravagant wife, although a man in his position would not draw more than three hundred rupees a month. A stroll with him through the Chinese quarter provided the solution of the riddle. We were swallowed up by a labyrinth of dark lanes and alleys, lit only by the glow of elongated paper lanterns, hanging before the doors of such shops as were still open. Passing diagonally through Macnaughten's district, from one corner to another, ran a street that was broader than the rest, and full of people

moving briskly to and fro; all Chinamen, in their broad satin trousers, their naked torsos glistening as though rubbed with oil. The houses were small and mean, and the house-doors looked like trap-doors leading into dark cellars. In the dim light of the paper lanterns the figures wandering hither and thither produced a strange and ghostly impression on the beholder. The transparencies over the house-doors were for the most part red. We came to a grey, grimy-looking house; the door stood open, and the empty passage was veiled in pitchy darkness. Macnaughten seized me by the arm. "Stoop, stoop!" said he, under his breath. I did so, and just at the right moment, for I felt the touch of a tightly stretched wire on my forehead—a sort of trap for unexpected visitors. Anyone unaware of this arrangement, who should enter the house in some degree of haste, would run the risk of cutting his throat, as though by a sharp knife, by this thin, tightly strained wire. A few steps farther on, carefully feeling our way in the darkness, we came to a staircase of perhaps a dozen steps; so narrow that one had to negotiate them with the foot placed sideways, if one did not wish to fall down them in the darkness. Then came a second stair which led upwards to the right. A small, slow-burning oil lamp, such as is used in opium "joints" for roasting the pellet of opium while preparing it for smoking, was burning in a vaulted niche perhaps a foot in height. Beside it stood a thick-set Chinese. His appearance there was

so unexpected that I shrank back startled. However, the well-oiled Celestial greeted the Inspector with a friendly grin and opened a door, through which we passed, bowing our heads, so low was the lintel, to find ourselves in a brightly-lit room. Even had my eyes, dazzled by the contrast with the darkness from which we had just emerged, been able at once to take in what stood before them, I could not have found my bearings with a single glance, for a dense smoke veiled the whole apartment, and the lamps shone through it feebly, like rush-lights in a dense fog. I was seized with a feeling of nausea, and at first was convinced that I should have to beat a precipitate retreat. The odour of hot humanity, the smoke, and the smell of opium, resulted in a most repugnant mixture. However, the nausea disappeared, and we advanced into the middle of the room, which was perhaps some sixteen feet long by twelve or thirteen feet wide. Against the walls stood dirty wooden bedsteads, shiny with perspiration, with pillows lying on them that had once, perhaps, been white. Only four of these couches were unoccupied; on the others lay sleeping figures, like bundles of rags rolled up into a ball, or stretched out to their full length, lying on their backs with open mouth. One elderly man, with a deeply furrowed face, and horrible ulcers on his left leg, which he had exposed to the knee by pulling up his trousers, lay there with open mouth and eyes, in a profound stupor, murmuring unintelligible phrases.

The whole room was in a disgusting state, and the ceiling overhead was invisible, so dense was the cloud of smoke beneath it. I remembered how on the Malabar coast, when the heavy rain-clouds lay over the countryside, the smoke from the natives' huts was unable to rise, but crept along the ground, vainly seeking a way of escape upwards.

There were no windows in the room, and the only door was that by which we had entered. In the middle of the "opium-joint" stood a round table, some two feet in height, upon which were a number of oil lamps. At the table sat two Chinese, with the owner of the premises, Mouko Liang. This was a jovial fellow, always smiling, although the perspiration fell in great drops over his glistening hirsute chest. The other two men were rolling pellets of opium, about the size of a pea, which they transfixed with a tiny stiletto, not unlike a sewing-needle, roasting them at one of the little lamps. The roasting opium gave forth a penetrating, sweetish odour, acrid and nauseating. The sizzling pellet was then applied to the tiny bowl of the opium pipe, and at the same time the smoker inhaled the smoke through the thick bamboo tube; he took only a few pulls, which none the less consumed the little pellet; then he laid his pipe on the table and slowly crossed the room to one of the empty couches. One of these two customers began to converse with me. He told me that he came to the place every evening. When he awoke in the morning he went straight

to his work. He was a basket-maker. As a token that he had taken a fancy to me he filled his pipe and held it to my mouth. Unwilling to hurt his feelings, I inhaled the smoke. Such nausea as I felt at the moment when the opium smoke entered my lungs for the first time I had never in my life experienced; it was as though someone had pulled a thick sack over my head and down to my shoulders and tied the neck of it until I was on the point of suffocation; I was overcome, too, by vertigo, and a feeling as though my head had turned into a balloon, and that someone was inflating it by blowing through a light bamboo tube. I pushed the pipe away after the first few pulls, and attempted to hasten from the room, as I felt myself to be on the point of vomiting, but during the next few moments this feeling became less perceptible, and after the second pipe, which I courageously accepted, the feeling of repulsion was by no means so strong, and I was even ready to smoke a third. "That," said Macnaughten, "is everybody's experience, and if you were to stay here to-day you would be lost, for every day you would return." In this the opium-smoker is like the drinker of absinthe. There is the same nausea to begin with, then comes the desire to try it once more, merely as a matter of interest or curiosity; and then follows the desire, the craving, the passion, the habit, until the poison takes possession of us. If Macnaughten had foreseen that only three days later I should return, alone, late at night, to wander through

the alleys of Chinatown, seeking the house where I had first become acquainted with opium, and that later still I sent my servant to the bazaar, not far from Park Street, where only destitute Europeans, half-castes, natives, grooms and soldiers' wenches reside, in order to procure the poison for me, and that eventually I indulged in it every evening, he would scarcely have taken me to the opium-den of Mouko Liang.

Mouko Liang offered us refreshments, but we declined, for although I had by then become somewhat accustomed to the nauseous atmosphere, my mind was still rather cloudy, and I longed to get out into the open air. We visited in all three such places, all arranged very much as was the first, all being situated in cellars which were really inaccessible to foreigners. The night was already far advanced and the grey of dawn becoming visible, yet the streets without were no less animated. None of the people in the street seemed to go any great distance; they simply pop out of one house and into another.

Small as is the Chinese quarter of Calcutta, it contains a population of perhaps 10,000, with only a few half-breeds and natives of the very lowest castes. Macnaughten told me that in this quarter there were, perhaps, forty opium-dens, and that the drug might be bought in any of the shops.

We came to a restaurant at a street-corner. The kitchen was brightly lit by an acetylene lamp, in a kind of liquor-store. The windows were full of a display of Chinese delicacies, sea-grass,

swallows' nests, and every imaginable kind of tit-bit, in dainty china saucers or on wooden boards. Strolling down the street and glancing into the kitchen one could watch the process of baking, boiling and stewing the foodstuffs offered for sale. I have lived in European hotels of the highest class, but nowhere have I seen such perfect cleanliness in the kitchens as in those of the poorest Chinese restaurants in Calcutta's Chinatown, or the cities of Southern China. Here stood a man before a table scoured to a dazzling whiteness, kneading dough. All was scrupulously clean; only the perspiration was trickling over the man's glistening, flour-daubed body, and it was impossible to prevent a drop of sweat from his heated forehead from falling now and again on the pastry rolled out before him. Yonder a woman was bending over a frying-pan in which fritters were bubbling in smoking fat. We went through the kitchen attached to the restaurant. In almost all Chinese restaurants the intending guest has to pass through the kitchen, for not only can he thus convince himself of the scrupulous freshness and cleanliness of his food, but he also has before him, in concrete form, the menu of the day.

In this case the host knew my friend the Inspector. After a courteous greeting he wanted to take us into a small room, set aside for his wealthier clients. However, we preferred the general dining-room. Five guests were already seated there, eating Chinese dishes with Chinese implements in the Chinese manner—eating them

with chop-sticks out of little saucers, and drinking with them a bottle of American beer from San Francisco. We ordered a dish of birds' nests. The reader must not imagine anything unappetising. What we ate he may often have eaten at a well-to-do German dinner-table. The bird's nest looked like a cuckoo's nest, such as in my boyhood I often prepared for Easter. There was a sort of wreath of beautifully cooked vermicelli, the hollow space in the middle being filled with minced pork, beef, veal and chicken, fried in the best butter; and over it was poured a sauce of tomatoes and other deliciously flavoured herbs. But before this our host brought us a soup of sea-grass, which to me seemed to taste of nothing in particular. Of the birds' nests, however, I ate two, and my portions were not by any means small ones; roughly speaking, each would have filled the inside of a soft felt hat.

But we had to go on further, and took our leave of the restaurant-keeper. I noticed that Macnaughten did not ask for a reckoning. When I questioned him in the street outside he gave me the key to a number of little problems which had until then puzzled me. No restaurant-keeper would take money from him, even though he might bring twenty guests with him, for they all overstepped the limits of the law, in some way or another, and were all under many obligations to him. The opium-dens were strictly prohibited by the Government, and now and again, it became his duty, as District Inspector,

to get up a raid, in order to provide the courts with offenders, and these raids he always carried out in a conscientious manner. But—as a rule he went round, the evening before, to warn the keepers of the opium-dens and gambling-hells of the coming raid. Consequently, when on the following evening he put in an unexpected appearance with his escort of constables, to search the ward, the opium-dens and gambling-hells were all closed, and in return for such warnings the keepers of such places paid him a monthly tribute. Even the prostitutes and keepers of disorderly houses had to pay toll. And it is of these two last instances that I wish to speak in this chapter.

My journey of exploration with Macnaughten had fascinated me; I wanted to see more of this new, strange life. Macnaughten, accordingly, took me to the card-room of one of his oldest clients. I shall never forget what I saw that night. There were perhaps a hundred men tightly packed into one small room; all of them smoking—little cigars made of rolled-up tobacco-leaves, often containing opium, or strongly flavoured cigarettes made in China—and all crowding about a table some nine feet square, divided into four parts. The game they played was known as fan-tan. In fan-tan anyone can hold the bank, provided he is a member of the club at which he is playing; every gambling-hell constitutes a club. The stakes are unlimited. But never, even in the best European society, where self-control is a mark of good breeding,

have I seen such apathetic serenity, or such control over the emotions, as in the gambling-hells of Calcutta's Chinatown. I have seen men staking a few bits of silver, and others, at the same table, risking handfuls of gold. Only from their faces was it possible to observe any difference of social position, since all were dressed alike in black satin trousers and black and yellow slippers, the pigtail either wound round the head like a wreath or hanging down the back. The upper part of their bodies gleamed like polished metal and was dripping with sweat. The smell of lard, perspiration, and the indescribable Chinese aroma, almost stifled me during the first few minutes, but the desire to see and experience helped me to overlook such externalities and finally to become oblivious of them. I became absorbed in the faces of those about me, searching them and guessing what was going on behind these mask-like visages.

Europeans are not admitted to the better class of clubs (those Europeans who frequent Chinatown being mostly soldiers of the garrison), because, despite the strict prohibition of the military authorities, they come to the Chinese quarter drunk, and always give rise to strife and disorder. The Chinaman is the most peaceful and amiable person imaginable; but there are limits to his self-control, and it often happens that early in the morning stupefied European visitors—intoxicated either by opium or by alcohol—are found by the police, stark naked, at the entrance to the Chinese quarter. What is

more, dead bodies have been found, lying in the gutter, and in such cases the Calcutta police make only a show of conducting an inquiry, since the Europeans are always in the wrong.

It was not long before I was on the most friendly terms with these people, who had previously been quite unknown to me. They took a delight in my almost childlike pleasure and enthusiasm when I managed to allude to my luck at the card-table in a few Chinese phrases, and now and again one of them, when in his opinion I had made a bet which I stood no chance of winning, with a most friendly smile, would wager the money upon some other number. If I lost he was ready, despite my protests, to replace my money. Before long I was known to everyone and was often the butt of friendly jokes. I noticed that many players who had lost a certain amount of money, used to go to the other end of the room, where a household altar, shrouded with a silken curtain, hung on the wall above the image of a god. On either side of the altar burned a little lamp, above which hung a sacrificial bowl. The player placed an offering in the bowl on such occasions; the Inspector told me that it was usually a fifth part of his winnings. It is incumbent, moreover, on the holder of the bank to offer the god a fifth part of his winnings. The money is applied to assisting the poor of the Chinese quarter.

I will now briefly explain the game of fan-tan for the benefit of those who are not acquainted with it. The table, as I have explained, is

divided into four parts. The banker sits at one end. Before him is a little heap of cowrie-shells. With a small bowl he separates from the rest a portion of the cowries—as many, on an average, as would fill a fairly large coffee-cup—from the heap lying before him, and then, with a little wand, he takes away the rest of the shells, always four at a time, so that at last there is a remainder of three, two, or even one. If none is left the banker has lost; in the alternative he receives the amount of his stake, or twice or three times the amount, according to the number on which he has wagered. I have seen men who no longer had any silver left wager their last coppers; and if these too were lost, in stoical silence they drew their rings from their fingers, or laid before the banker some jewel, or golden ornament, worn about the body; who pays out a sum of money corresponding with the value of the article. I have even seen a man, an old, wizened Chinaman, who, to judge by his face, was a victim of the opium habit, produce a chain, on the security of which he pledged himself to work for the banker for the term of ten days as his bondsman, almost his slave. A member of the club told me that now and again a gambler would wager not only himself, but his wife and children into the bargain, thus condemning them to several months of slavery: so deeply rooted is the Chinaman's love of gambling. The remark is not wholly unjustified, that where two Chinamen come together, they will next moment be playing a game of chance.

Behind the gaming-room there was a kind of restaurant, and a private room in which the more notable members of the club assembled. Macnaughten left me alone with them for a time, telling me that he still had to pay a few visits of inspection. I was struck by the fact that these people, unlike the Hindus, overwhelmed me with questions of the most private nature. They spoke of this, that, or the other, and every one of them had a few pleasant words for me. Where did I live? they wanted to know: "for," said one of them, "since you are so kind as to come to see us, we should like to pay Your Excellency a visit." Mere politeness, I imagined, and gave them my address, and with that I thought no more of the matter. Three days later, however, one of the company called on me, accompanied by his wife—unless indeed she were a hired consort! I spent more than an hour with them alone, and would willingly have prolonged our interview, but Macnaughten appeared, in order to march me off and to spring on me some fresh surprise. For five minutes we wandered through lanes and alleys which at that hour were quiet as the dead, and then came to an old house, built in the Hindu style. All was wrapped in darkness. My companion knocked on the door with a rhythmical tapping that spoke of a preconcerted sign; but no one replied. He then rapped on the shutters of the adjacent window, and as again no sign of life was to be heard he thrust his stick between the shutters and opened them. A faint light shone through

the window. Inside I could see a woman in a long white *sari,* which she was then in the act of wrapping round her body. Macnaughten announced himself and again closed the shutters, and after a time we heard someone shuffling along the passage leading to the door. After a while it was opened by someone we could not see. We stepped into the passage and entered the room. An ugly old slut, the mother of Rachel—for such was the name of the woman who admitted us—lit a paraffin lamp, and placed a green shade over it, so that I was able to inspect the interior of the room. It was a grimy place, and on the walls were cheap and tasteless pictures; hunting-scenes, such as one sees in a German tap-room, a picture of the Immaculate Conception, and underneath it a brightly-coloured picture of the King of England. There too was Kali, arrayed in glittering gold, and to crown all, at the other side of the room, was a huge screen, which displayed some fifty or more picture-cards from cigarette-boxes and match-boxes. In the middle of the room stood a brown table on which stood the lamp. A few bottles of seltzer-water and an empty whisky-bottle likewise graced the table. The room was reeking of paraffin and alcohol. Over the bed hung a curtain of white tulle and when I regarded it more closely I discovered a Bengali who appeared to be squeezing himself as close as possible to the shadowy wall in the hope of escaping observation. This was one of Rachel's "lovers." When he realized that we were not

at once leaving the room he turned over and peered into the lighted chamber with a drowsy, foolish expression on his face. We conversed as though he were not present and at last he went to sleep. Rachel disappeared for a moment and appeared with a bottle of whisky. I declined her invitation to drink, as the quality of the whisky did not impress me. She then sat down, facing me. She must, at one time, have been marvellously beautiful, before she had sunk so low as to admit foreigners to her bedroom, even when her "lovers" were present. Her age was perhaps twenty-five, but already she was inclining towards obesity; deep, black semicircles lay beneath her eyes, and deep furrows ran from the nostrils to the corners of the mouth; her breasts were already somewhat fallen. Her mother, however, who very wisely, though it may be unintentionally, had seated herself in the semi-darkness, beyond the circle of light thrown by the lamp, was perhaps the most repulsive-looking woman I have ever seen. She was a witch in the truest sense of the word. She had the greedy "begging eye" and a coarse mouth which continually muttered the words: "Oh, what an honour, what a great honour, what an honour! God bless your grace for such an honour! We are only dust, but your grace has uplifted us! May your grace's name never be forgotten!" And she kept on raising her folded hands to her forehead; and once she came up to us and prostrated herself before the Inspector, placing first her hands and then her forehead

upon his feet. She was about to do the same to me, but I managed to ward her off with my hands; for I felt that I should not have been able to control my desire to kick her away.

And now I learned the nature of the surprise awaiting me: "Where is Malka?" asked the Inspector, and turning to me he explained that a most beautiful girl was about to be exhibited for my inspection. "You'll never in your life be offered such a bargain again." Before I could recover from my amazement Rachel had already disappeared, and I heard in the room above me excited whispers, a desperate scuffling, pleading, and then angry shouts. Rachel came back alone; then the old woman stood up. Making use of a disgusting term of abuse, of whose meaning she herself was probably ignorant: "Untimely birth of a black-skinned harlot!"—and as she spoke the words she was slavering at the mouth with wrath—she shuffled out of the room, and shortly afterwards I heard upstairs her scolding voice, which now elicited no reply. When she came downstairs again Malka preceded her. To me it was as though a heavenly radiance had flooded the room. I cannot describe the girl's beauty as she stood there before me, trembling with hopeless fear and anguish, her eyes fixed on the ground; only once, when the old woman pinched her arm, and commanded her, with a villainous glance, to speak to me, did she look at me with that in her eyes which almost brought me to my feet, almost induced me to put my arms about her

and whisper to her: "Beloved child, I will take you away from this hell of filth and misery! Don't be afraid: I will be as a brother to you, and no shadow of this place shall fall upon you!" I felt within me a genuine love for this beautiful creature; my blood ran swiftly in my veins, my pulse was racing as in a fever, yet to-day when I think of it, I can still say that in this love, this admiration, there was nothing sensual. I wanted only to take her in my arms, and protect her as an elder brother would protect his sister. The old woman stood behind her at the door as though anticipating an attempt to escape. "Go on, show yourself to the gentleman! Speak!" she mumbled to the girl, with her scolding voice, now and again pushing her forward. Rachel stood by, saying nothing, though now and again, she laughed derisively at the girl's timidity. The Inspector and I sat silently at the table. At last I begged him to tell the old woman that she ought to let the child go, for it was plain that she was about to burst out crying. But he answered: "Don't you worry yourself; to-day or to-morrow, one day or other, she will have to give in, and after all, it's better that you should be the first she is put to bed with." As he expressed this, to him, self-evident fact in this brutal manner, it seemed to me that I was standing before something new in my life, something intangible, that touched me to the very quick. Finally the old woman and Rachel lost patience with the tongued-tied girl, and, seizing her on either hand, they pulled

her forwards to the table. With her bony hands, disfigured by black finger-nails and warts, the old witch turned the girl's face toward me as a slave-dealer might have done on recommending his wares. "She is still a virgin, fourteen years of age, and has never yet seen a man, master. She will bring joy and prosperity to your house." The Inspector, too, encouraged me: "You'll never have such another opportunity; and only two hundred rupees a month. It's a real bit of luck, having her offered to you for that price."

At last the girl sat down beside me, but when I softly stroked her cheek with my hand—and God knows it was only out of compassion for the poor child, forsaken, as she was, by God in heaven, and on earth lacking that holiest of things, a mother's love—she shrank back as though startled by the touch of an icy hand. The old woman saw her shudder, stood up, went over to her, and tugged at her hair, the torment being accompanied by a filthy term of abuse. I could stand it no longer; I rose to my feet and led the woman aside: "What are you thinking of? I didn't come here to buy a harlot! Let the girl go to her room!" While the old woman gazed at me in perplexity, since for her the only explanation of my visit was that I wanted to buy her daughter, I took Malka by the hand and led her to the door, which I opened for her, and closed upon her slow and tearful exit.

I might as well have agreed to the transaction, for I had not in any way improved her lot by

my refusal, as the Inspector told me as we made our way home. And so Malka herself informed me when I visited the house a fortnight later. Day and night her image had followed me. I had never seen such a beautiful girl, and my compassion for the child was in conflict with my sensual longing for the ripe body of the woman. But when I called again it was too late; an Armenian Jew had purchased her. She went to his house of a night, but in the morning returned to her mother. There are many like her in Calcutta; mostly Jewesses from Bagdad, most beautiful women. I would gladly have gone to visit the child again, but she was now the property of another, and one day I saw him also, a hideous, lascivious, repulsive person with a wry, hooked nose, broken yellow fangs, a bald head, projecting ears, a creaking, piping voice and a wart as big as a nut behind the right ear. An ugly devil, but he paid a hundred rupees over and above the price for which she was offered to me. Only once was she alone with me for a moment, and then she whispered to me, as though wearied to death: "Kind master, why did you not take me then? How much rather would I have been with you!"

Since then I have travelled far; I have seen many cities and many parts of India, and have known many men, Europeans—English, French and German—and everywhere it has been my mournful experience to discover that among them all there was scarcely one who did not procure for himself, much as I have described, a mistress

for the duration of his stay in India :—a disgrace to white civilization! The vernacular term for this relation is "a native marriage." The orphanages of the Christian missions, and especially those of the Catholic mission, are full of the children born of such cohabitation. The worst of it is that the Hindus themselves condone and even contribute to this scandalous state of affairs. On the Malabar coast I knew a family who were comfortably situated, who assuredly were not compelled by poverty to sell their only daughter to a European merchant. Yet this is what they did. I shall never forget the evening that I spent at a friend's bungalow, not far from the house of these people. There was an outburst of loud weeping, sobbing and wailing. When I inquired of my friend as to the cause of this lamentation he told me casually that about a week earlier the servant of a German merchant had concluded a bargain with the parents whereby the girl, who as yet was only sixteen years of age, was delivered to the merchant as his concubine for the sum of two hundred rupees. To-day she was to be taken to her new home by the servant. I was foolish enough to believe that I might be of service to the girl, could I first obtain speech with her, and I went over to the house, but the parents showed me to the door, so that I should have done better to have minded my own business. In the course of time I learned to hold my tongue. There are few Europeans who do not profit by this custom, and I learned from Macnaughten

that he, like many of his colleagues, added to his income by his intervention in such transactions.

During the first few years of my life in India I was often tempted to boast of our superior morality and philosophy; but when I visited Calcutta's Chinatown and witnessed the pitiful poverty of its streets and alleys I held my peace and was overcome with shame. I have honestly tried, both in Hindu and European circles, to assist in the abolition of this stain upon our civilization, and always, when I have endeavoured to arouse in a young man's heart, a feeling of sympathy with women, a sense of the holiness of womanhood, and the sacredness of the function of motherhood, there arises before me the face of Malka, gazing at me with pleading eyes: "Fight for us and our sex: strike a blow for the honour and the holiness of motherhood!"

SITA-BHAI

MY FRIENDS THE BANJARA, with whom I shared the night watches, had departed on their way, following the endless military road built by the great kings of the past, whose fame is told even to-day in the folk-songs of the country. I had met them the evening before at nightfall, as I was crossing the river. Far and wide there was not a tree, not a village, to be seen; and it so happened that after a while I left my fire and went over to theirs. The flames of my own camp-fire died down, and as the profoundest darkness lay over the jungle I remained with them, listening to their songs and legends and the tales of their wonderful journeys. We got on so well that we even cooked our simple meal in the same pot and helped one another to frequent portions. There were eight of them: three men, four women, and a girl, who, by Hindu law and according to Hindu conceptions, had already become a widow. I have always liked the Banjara, though their reputation with the Hindu population is a bad one, and they are to some extent avoided by the villagers, as are the travelling gipsies in Germany and Southern Europe. When they approach a village all property is protected with especial vigilance. Really, however, they are harmless enough, and,

if one takes time to know them, childlike in their simplicity and dependence.

As I have mentioned, they had gone their way, after stowing their pots and blankets in a bullock-cart which accompanied them on their travels, and now all that I could see, far behind me, was a little cloud of eddying dust, raised by the cart in question. My thoughts busied with the events of the previous night, I wandered along the highway; the cool morning breeze drifted across the jungle, although the swiftly-climbing sun was already making itself felt through the coolness, and the heat of the day was beginning to invade highway and jungle. The landscape was almost in monotone; on either side of the highway, which was inches deep in dust, stood the typical thorn-bushes of the jungle, with their scanty foliage, which affords no shade, no refuge from the noontide heat. Between them were clumps of cactus or isolated heads of aloe, whose bare stem rises yards into the sky above the plant itself, merely lending emphasis to the monotony of the general outlook. No one was working now on the far from numerous fields that lay here and there amidst the wilderness, for it was now the height of summer; the harvest was over and the weary earth was thirsting for rain.

The great military roads of India are a text-book of folk-lore. Here, on a scrubby pony, grey with the dust of the highway, comes a Brahmin, squatting cross-legged on the saddle, which looks like an arm-chair; unless indeed

his bronze-coloured shanks hang down on either side of his beast, dangling to and fro in time with the pony's gait. He has drawn the cloth of his turban over his mouth, as a protection from the scorching air and the fine dust, which ever and again, lifted by the light breeze, flies across the highway, or a bullock-cart comes rattling along, the driver, with his gaily coloured waistcoat, being, to all appearances, its only human freight. He sits swaying on one of the shafts of his cart, and one marvels at the ease with which he retains his narrow seat. The bamboo roof of the cart behind him is covered with a white tilt, which in the front of the cart hangs down like a curtain. Now and again a narrow rift appears in the middle of the curtain, and a finely chiselled nose and two coal-black eyes are revealed as their owner takes a surreptitious peep at the passers-by. There is always life on the military road. Consider the fakir, who carries his sole property and means of livelihood slung over his shoulder, or hanging from either end of his bamboo staff: who knows how many thousands of miles he has already travelled during the weeks—nay, months—which he has spent on this highway, that stretches like a cord from north to south, across the vast peninsula? Or here we have a little group of wandering singers, all their properties bundled together on the back of a little ox, whose horns are decorated with brass rings or painted with the favourite colours, red and yellow. The women wear wide, hooped petticoats, as in the days of crinolines,

that make a clapping sound as they walk, like the leaves of the phœnix palm-tree. Their dust-grey feet are bedecked on toes and ankles with rings and bangles, that accompany their passage with an incessant chinking and chiming, like the tinkle of tiny bells. The picturesque red *sari* is thrown across the breast and covers the deeply bronzed face; but in spite of their songs of love and happiness the faces of the women wear always an expression of weariness and longing which they themselves are powerless to explain, much less could an alien observer hope to interpret it. Only at long intervals does a European pass this way with his escort of native soldiers and his bearers: a Government official on his tour of inspection. As for the Nomads, they pass us by like silent figures on a screen; we know not whence they come nor whither they go. The boundless jungle conjures them up out of nothingness and resumes them into its infinity. But all those whom one encounters have a greeting for one, and although one has never seen them before, the greeting is always "Hai, brother!" and often, if a shady spot is to be found, the travellers seat themselves and bring out the earthenware water-pipe, and inhale, chatting of whence and whither, genially, and without inquisitiveness, to part again with the brotherly salute: "God bless thee! May Siva guard thee, brother!"

The hour of noon approached; in the distance appeared clumps of palms, and the foliage of banyans, and a long line drawn across the

horizon: the river! Beyond it, almost melting into the blue of the heavens, rose the steep hills on which lay Palghatti, my goal. We had yet to endure one more hour of wayfaring in the scorching heat of the sun, and the river was reached. One who has wandered for days through the jungle, where nothing meets the eye but the uniform grey of the jungle soil, which, after rain, has a special and peculiar savour, for the rains, draws a deep breath of relief at the sight of the river, like a traveller through the desert when he reaches an oasis. Everywhere the bank of the river shows traces of the passage of mankind; and here are blackened stones, of which the wanderer, only last night, built his simple hearth, and here lie scattered potsherds; or yonder, there may still be travellers there, taking a short rest. The oxen having been unyoked from the cart, are plashing blissfully in the precious stream.

The men were squatting by the water's edge smoking the inevitable hookah, while the women somehow busied themselves with domestic tasks.

I crossed the river, and once on the opposite bank, I climbed the steep road that led to the ancient fortified city. Down by the river-side are three little temples, built of the unhewn boulders from the river. Whosoever fords the river takes thither his thankoffering and says a prayer. Like a stork's nest, Palghatti is huddled together on its rocky hill-top, surrounded by a wall of yellowish-grey, unburned brick; a drawbridge giving its inhabitants access to the

outer world. The road leading to the city is steep and fatiguing, its upper portion consisting of some two hundred roughly hewn steps. As one approaches it more closely the war-like appearance of the ancient fortress is strongly emphasized. The high city wall has been pierced by many embrasures, and at a short distance away from it rise wooden turrets and watch-towers which afford a view over the whole plain. No enemy can approach Palghatti without being seen from these watch-towers hours before his arrival. When one enters the city through the drawbridge the post-office rises before one, like an outpost of modernity; but its architectural style and the colour of its walls are in perfect harmony with the close-packed medley of houses, as though it had already existed in the years when Sivaji Maharata and his hordes were spreading terror over the land. Palghatti too, after a long and changeful history, fell into his hands, and from it he sallied forth to war upon the princes of the surrounding countryside. To the right of the city gates, on the lofty walls, there are still some ancient cannon. Their brazen mouths, which once upon a time spat forth fiery terror, are to-day painted with streaks of red by pious Hindus of the lower castes, while broken coco-nut shells lie between the wheels. So even to-day, when the people are again longing for liberation from the yoke of the alien ruler, they honour the intrepid hero who protected all Hinduism from the increasingly covetous hand of the Moguls. Sivaji can scarcely be called

a historical figure, yet in the heart of Hindustan, in the hearts of the students of high caste or low, as in those of the humble villagers, his image survives as that of the half-divine hero, in his attributes like Krishna, who is once more to set them free from the power of the foreign oppressor.

Facing the post-office, divided from it by a little market-place, paved with round pebbles from the river-bed, on which the wooden sandals of the inhabitants, as they hasten to and fro, resound as though a labyrinth of cellars lay beneath them, stands the school: a school of the good old days. There is no blackboard there; no map of India hangs on the white-washed walls, and there are no forms or desks on which the little pupils can carve their names with their pocket-knives as a memorial for the admiration of future generations. The school-master, an ancient pundit, whose toothless mouth is always filled with the red juice of the betel-nut, sits cross-legged before a desk perhaps a foot in height, brandishing in one hand the emblem of his calling, a long bamboo as thick as a man's thumb. The fifty little urchins who sit about him in a semicircle, whispering and teasing one another, just like European youngsters, while he indulges in a little nap, repeat, as loudly as they can (five or six gathered about each text-book), the lessons for the day. A terrible din prevails, so that to a European it is a mystery how anything could ever be taught by this method.

To me, of course, the scene was by no means new; my own activities in the State of Mysore were still too fresh in my memory. In Mysore I had succeeded in convincing the authorities that the building of a boarding-school for the daily boarders, as they were called, was an absolute necessity, and in the course of time there were perhaps eight hundred pupils in my boarding-house. In all good faith, thinking to do them a kindness, I made it a rule that absolute silence must prevail during the evening, between the hours of seven and ten, when the boys were supposed to be preparing their work for the following day; for until then every pupil had of course been reading his lesson aloud to himself. The reader can imagine what a din there was with perhaps eight hundred young fellows, each preparing his own lessons, one working out a mathematical problem, another committing a passage to memory, a third preparing a speech for the debating society on Saturday, a fourth learning by heart a chapter of history, and all of them rehearsing their tasks at the tops of their voices! Since in my college the strictest discipline prevailed—for it was based on the mutual affection of pupil and master—my request was observed and obeyed. But hardly a week had elapsed before a deputation of boarders came to me late at night, urgently imploring me to cancel my prescription, because they found it impossible to do brain-work in any other way, so that when of an evening I passed through the boarders' rooms I was once

more greeted by the manifold sing-song of the zealous scholars.

I entered into conversation with the master of this primitive school, a tall, spindle-shanked Brahmin, thin as a lath. When the scholars ceased their din—since they were inquisitively listening to our conversation—he gave the nearest pupil a whack with his stick, as careless in his choice of the individual as in that of the part of the body struck. While we continued our conversation the fifty youngsters, stimulated to a display of renewed zeal by his magic wand, once more proceeded to bellow the passage set for them with all the energy at their command. An onlooker might well have thought that we were quarrelling, since we were naturally compelled to make ourselves heard above the uproar caused by the noisy pupils. As we were talking I noticed in a corner of the room a piece of timber projecting from the wall, from which hung a chain perhaps two feet in length, with a cord attached to it, and inquired of the worthy master as to the purpose of this contrivance. It was nothing less than a "gallows" for the benefit of possible offenders amongst his pupils. The province of corporal punishment is a very interesting subject, with which I shall deal on some other occasion.

At my request the teacher gave his pupils a half-holiday, and accompanied me on my brief tour through the city, showing me the chief sights. But the eastern ward of the city he would not enter, since there dwelt the

adherents of the "left hand." In many towns and villages, even in Madras, I have noted this division of the Hindu community into a "left-handed" and a "right-handed" party, but nowhere was it so conspicuous as in Palghatti. One cannot call these parties sects, neither are they castes, and the date or motive of their origin has never been established, but it goes right back to prehistorical ages. The "left-handers" of Palghatti had their own temple, their own shops and factories, and watched the line of demarcation that divided them from the "right-handers" with a vigilance that often led to actual hostilities.

The houses and huts that stood along the city wall were built actually on the wall itself. We went up on to the roof of one of these houses and emerged on the wide wall that encircles the city. So wide is it that an ox-cart can comfortably be driven along it. The view from the city wall over the wide plains displayed but little variety, though beautiful enough. There was nowhere a mountain or a forest to bring the gaze to a standstill. The grey monotony of the countryside was enlivened only by the deep green of the groves of clustering palm-trees in which the small villages were quite concealed. Over the dark roof of palm-leaves fluttered here and there a yellow flag from the highest pinnacle of a village temple. Long lines of palm-trees revealed the course of a river. The roads that traversed the jungle from one village to another were like dark pencil-strokes on a background of brown paper. Ever and again tiny moving

points appeared on these lines, wrapped each in a little white cloud—the dust raised by some bullock-cart, moving through the jungle, bound for some mysterious goal—or still smaller specks spoke of peasants working in the fields. Right at the foot of the hill on which the city sat enthroned one could see the herd-boys herding their black buffalo, and women bathing in the river, while the kine quenched their thirst along its banks.

In the company of the schoolmaster I cooked my modest meal—a little *dahl* and a *chupatti*—while I was performing my culinary feats. The rising generation of Palghatti stood at a respectful distance from the verandah, watching the operation, nor did they depart when I sat down to my dinner. This, from the Hindu point of view, was not offensive curiosity; the foreigner is obviously the property of the place in which he finds himself. He has no right to conceal himself; on the contrary, all his doings are open to the censorship of the public. Then, as the noontide heat, reflected from the stone pavement, was settling down over the city, I went indoors with the schoolmaster, and seated myself before the children, and in half an hour's time the narcotic fumes had done their work. I stretched myself out on the floor and fell asleep.

It was afternoon; the narrow streets were once more quickening into life and activity. Here and there, before the shops, and on the verandah of the post-office, men were squatting

and conversing as I took my leave of the schoolmaster on the drawbridge. I descended the hill to the river and proceeded on my way upstream along its bank. Only those who have travelled, day after day, through the drought of the jungle, with nothing to meet their gaze but the everlasting grey-brown soil, from which now and again clouds of dust rise whirling into the air, like mysterious phantoms, dancing before the wayfarer's eyes, approaching and finally disappearing without a trace—only those can conceive of my delight when I was once more able to stroll along a green river bank. A cool breeze floated toward me across the water; the nests of the weaver-birds in the palm-trees, that leaned out over the stream, swayed slightly in the gentle stream of air, and the water reflected the verdant beauty of the riverside. In the midst of the stream lay an island, overgrown by trees and bushes, amidst which luminous blossoms here and there shone forth. From the bushes surrounding a small creek, which received the crystal-clear water, that flowed from the sheer rock as in a bowl, some wild doves were cooing, while dragon-flies danced in the sunlight over the liquid mirror, and farther on, round the edge of the island, a flock of white rice-birds were taking their rest.

I had just wound my freshly washed waist-cloth about my person, when the sound of singing came round the bend of the river, accompanied by the tinkling of the *vina*.[1] It was a strange

[1] A stringed instrument, something like the guitar.

voice, a soft treble, and the stringed accompaniment sounded like the playing of a harp. Nearer and nearer drew the singing and the playing, and at last the player stood before me. She was a *sunyassi*; and never yet had I met a wandering nun whose appearance was so impressive. The yellow *sari* reached from the crown of her head to her feet; round her neck hung a necklace of brilliant topazes; but the most conspicuous thing about her was the beauty of her face. Its complexion was a soft olive, and as yet it showed only a few faint lines, that gave it the expression of a sublime and worshipful motherhood and a spiritual peace attained by suffering. Her eyes were bright and clear and framed by thick black lashes. She might perhaps have been forty years of age, yet both face and figure showed the freshness of youth. A red ribbon bore her *vina* about her neck. When she saw me she even ceased to sing. Her song had been a hymn to the goddess Sarasvati. I bowed to her and began the exchange of courtesies and news customary among the wanderers on the ancient highways of India. The nun sat down in the shadow of a tree near by, and since I saw that she was tired, I brought her some water in a bowl, in order to wash her feet. As the sun was sinking, we set forth together upon our journey to Ketia, a little town on the river-bank. On the way thither she told me her story, which I shall now repeat, as far as my memory permits me, in her own words.

"I am called Sita-Bhai. My home is the village of Thana, near Secunderabad, in the Great Deccan. My father was a Brahmin of the sect of Siva worshippers, known far and wide as a learned pundit. My mother came of the same caste, but I was only a little child when she died; and my father's second wife was a Shatria. I can still remember the wedding-day, when he brought her to our house, as a young girl. Why, she was so young that I was able to play with her as with a sister, and we often went into the jungle, and wove wreaths of flowers, and decked ourselves out with them, or we made long chains of flowers, and hung them over the doors of the village temple, which was dedicated to the goddess Sarasvati, the goddess of wisdom. I had also two brothers, whom my father, when they were still quite little, sent to his brother in the city, so that they might attend the school of the white Sahibs. When I was four years old my father was already teaching me the holy tongue, and when I came to my twelfth year my knowledge of the holy Vedas was so great that they called me Sarasvati. I was then to be married, and my father found a bridegroom for me, with the help of a Kulin Brahmin. The wedding took place. I have only the slightest recollection of my husband, for I had hardly ever seen him before the wedding, and after the ceremony he left our village, in order to return and take me home, when I had come to a fitting age. But even before the end of the year in which the Brahmin had united us in eternal

bonds, he died of a fever, and I was left a widow. In my parents' house I learned nothing of the freedom which widows enjoy elsewhere; indeed, I found myself compelled to observe the old customs, to have the hair of my head cropped close, to sling the yellow cord of the penitent across my bosom, and to put away from me all the finery of the married woman. But my father and mother, despite the chastisement that Siva had ordained, treated me with love and consideration, and I continued my studies in the holy Vedas.

So the years went by, until I was seventeen. We lived, if not luxuriously, yet comfortably, being happy and contented. But all at once fear and suffering fell upon our town, and all the countryside about it. For two years in succession there had been no rain; during the first of these years we were able to eke out a miserable existence with the remains of the previous harvest, and when these were exhausted my father's brother lent us sufficient grain to keep body and soul together. But when, in the second year also, the gods sent us no rain, even my uncle became impoverished and famine entered our house. First my father sold our field; then he sold one garment after another, and all his gold and silver, in the adjacent city, so that he might purchase food for us. But our resources came to an end, and the day came when we found ourselves destitute. One evening my father flung himself on the ground in our little hut and called me to go to him. He took

my face between his hands and wept sorely. He blessed me, and I had to promise him that when he was dead I would leave the village with his wife, and go to his brother in the city. That same night he died, and with my mother, I sang the funeral hymns over his corpse.

In our village many were already dead. When we left it on the following day many people accompanied us. Most of those who were thus leaving their home had lost their bread-winner, and knew not whither they should go. On the way to the city we lived on the sour fruits of the jungle and the half-ripe figs of the banyan-tree. On the third day our hunger was so extreme that we could scarcely drag ourselves any farther, and at last we did what many others had done before us when tortured by hunger: we ate of the red soil of the jungle, mixed with the water from some village tank. The younger of my brothers, the jovial Jogina, had collapsed on the road on our very first day, and we had to leave him behind. On the evening of the third day we saw the loftiest minaret of Secunderabad in the last rays of the setting sun. But it seemed to us that our feet could never carry us so far; my mother and my brother at all events could go no farther. In vain did I implore two passers-by, who, like us, were striving to flee from the goddess of Death, to help me to get my mother and brother into the city, but they went their way, fearing lest their strength should be insufficient even for themselves. When the night fell we found ourselves

alone on the highway; the jackals were howling, for many dead bodies lay on the road. Next morning, when the sun was approaching the meridian, my brother Ramchand laid his head in my lap. He could no longer speak; his tongue was parched with thirst. I myself believed that I should soon join the god Yama, and I lay down and closed my eyes. When I woke again I was in my uncle's house; a white Sahib had found me as I lay unconscious in the sun, and had driven me into the city; the letters in my *sari* told him where my uncle lived, and there he left me. The decrees of Karma, my friend, are wonderful indeed, for this white Sahib was to become my lord and master. Listen to the story of this wonderful dispensation.

As long as my father was alive my uncle had always treated me with affection, and I imagined that in the day of affliction he would be our friend. But I was soon forced to realize that he was a dissolute and abandoned person. He had no loftier aim than the attainment of wealth, and I was to be sacrificed to his greed. You know, Sahib, that the Gora-log,[1] if they are spending only a short time in India, will often buy themselves a woman of our race and take her into their house. I was defenceless now that no father's eye could watch over me. The servant of the white Sahib, who had saved my life, often came to see my uncle and had private speech with him, but I did not know that I was the subject of their conversation. Now and

[1] White men.

again the Sahib himself came to our house; he was young and handsome, and although my father had told me that the white people were unclean, my love for him gradually began to grow in my heart. One evening my uncle shortly after a visit from the Sahib's servant, led me out of the house, so that no one should overhear us, and told me that I was to go, on the following day, to the house of the white Sahib. If I had been able to follow my own free will this news would have rejoiced me. But since all that had gone before made it clear to me that my uncle had sold me for money, I refused to go. But of what avail was my refusal, or my prayers and lamentations? My uncle was my father's next-of-kin, and I had to obey. My love for the Sahib, which had secretly unfolded itself in my heart, was now turned into hatred and contempt. It is true that I was to become his wife, but I should not be bound to him by the laws of our religion; I should be his mistress, whom he could send back whence she came did he become weary of her.

That night a litter of the Sahib's came for me, and my uncle and my Sahib's servant accompanied me to the Sahib's house, one walking on either side of me. The room set aside for me was a large one, and furnished with many articles unfamiliar to me, and there all night long I waited in fear and terror for him who had bought the right to dispose of my body. But he did not come. More than two weeks went by, and I was still always alone in

my room, save that only in the evening a serving-woman came to accompany me into the garden that lay behind the bungalow. During those days I often thought of escape, but whither could I go? For me only two things were possible. I must either go into the bazaar and become a 'joyless woman,' or return to my uncle's house, and my uncle would simply have sent me back again to my purchaser. So I remained where I was, and mourned for my dead father.

But when the first pain and bewilderment were assuaged I began once more to hope. The Sahib, whom I had loved at first, would surely come to my room, and then I would throw myself down at his feet and beg him for mercy. But I felt ashamed to ask for him. However, one night he came of his own accord. The terrible thing that I feared did not take place; he only stood before me for a long, long time, and then stroked my cheek with his hand, and said: 'You know how I got you; but now I feel ashamed of what I did. If you wish it, I will let you go. Yes; I will make it possible for you to avoid returning to the hateful house from which I took you. Only if you feel in your heart that you can forgive me, only if you feel that you can love me, shall I gratefully receive you into my house. Now lie down and sleep, my beloved, and be assured that I shall never lay a hand upon you as long as I do not feel that you return my love.' When he spoke to me thus my love for him became more powerful

than ever, and I longed then and there to throw myself into his arms, so that he might do with me what he thought good, but I was still silent, and he left the room, and I laid myself on my bed, weeping for shame and love. But on the following night I became his.

He did not treat me as most white Sahibs treat the maidens of our race whom they have bought; he showed his respect for me in all that he said; he instructed me in the language of his people; he brought a white woman teacher to the house, who was to teach me all the manners and customs befitting a Sahib's wife; and what was more, he did not hide me as though I had been something shameful. As I gradually learned the language and the customs of white people I had to keep him company when he invited friends of his own race to the house, and in his house I was spoken of as the mem-Sahib. The servant had told me that many of his friends no longer recognized him, and avoided the house, because he had placed me in a position befitting only a white woman. Such is the sense of honour prevailing among the white rulers of the country: they do not regard it as a sin or a disgrace to buy a Hindu girl as a slave is bought, but they do regard it as a disgrace and a dishonour to acknowledge in the face of all men the woman whose love they accept.

After about a year I bore him a son; and the love between us became even greater than before. Then something happened that wounded

me to the quick; he had had the courage to be seen with me in the open street, but the fruit of our love he sought to conceal. When the child could scarcely yet stand upon his feet he told me one day that we should not be able to keep him at home. I cast myself upon the ground before him, embracing his knees, and begged him to leave me the child or to send us both away from him. He persisted in his resolve, and I had not the strength to leave him, especially as he promised that I should now and again have opportunities to see the child. So he sent the boy away to a mission school to be educated. To please me he was given my father's name—Har Chandra. For three years the separation continued, and he saw how terribly I suffered under it. His love for me fought within him, and in his heart the spirit of the man and the father grew stronger. Ah, Sahib! how glorious was the time that now followed, when he was so good, so loving to us both! When the factory closed down for the night and he came home tired, he did not, like all other white Sahibs, go to the club, but stayed with us and played with us indoors or in the garden. But this happiness was not to last long. The day of parting came.

Our boy was fourteen years old, and in all the city there was not his fellow for beauty and cleverness. Yet there was something in him that often puzzled both his father and myself, and gave us food for thought. The boy loved to be alone, and when he talked to us, whether

sitting on his father's knee or at my feet, he would ask us questions that sounded strange upon the lips of a child. For even when quite a child he gave his mind to thoughts of God and cognate problems, and we delighted in his intellectual brilliance.

And then came the hour of destiny. It all returns to my mind as though it had been but yesterday.

The servants came to my husband and begged him for permission to go out after dinner, because a strange Sadhu had arrived and was preaching in the bazaar. Next day they were speaking in the kitchen and on the back verandah of the wonderful sermon which the Sadhu had preached the night before, and our Har Chandra was sitting in their midst and listening with glistening eyes to their report. On the second evening, as they were again about to set out for the bazaar, the boy came to me, flung his arms about my neck and—with his soft cheek pressed to mine—wheedled out of me permission to go to the bazaar with the servants, in order to see and hear this wonderful teacher. I knew that he would be in safe hands, so I granted the required permission. Many a time have I bitterly regretted the moment when I yielded to his childish coaxing; but it had to be so, for Karma goes its appointed way from one eternity to another.

The Sadhu stayed several weeks, and every day our son went in the early morning to the bazaar, where the holy man had pitched his tent

in the shade of a tree. I myself left the house two or three times in order to fetch the boy home when he failed to put in an appearance at the daily meal, and it was a wonderful picture that met my eyes: a venerable, grey-haired old man sitting on his bamboo mat, and before him our son, with glistening eyes and folded hands, asking him questions or listening to his words as though every syllable had been a grain of gold. We hardly knew the boy; he became so silent, and began to seek out the loneliest corners of our garden. We both knew that a wonderful change was going forward in his soul, but his father said that it would be unwise to endeavour to win his confidence by irritating questions. It might well be that something special and individual was growing to maturity in his mind.

One evening, when my husband had not yet returned from his place of business, and I was sitting with the Aga on the back verandah, Har Chandra came rushing up to me with loud cries of rejoicing. On the garden path that led from the street to the house stood the Sadhu. I rose, and holding my boy's hand I went forward to greet him. The holy man did not stay long, and his words were few. But it was as though the boy was drinking in every word that rose to his lips, and an indescribable anguish fastened itself upon my heart. When the holy man left us he blessed me as I knelt at his feet. He told me that my son was destined to great things, and would become a servant of

God. That night I could not sleep; I was oppressed by a feeling that something terrible was about to happen. Something for which I could find no words kept me awake, and several times I left the room, which I shared with my husband, and entered my boy's room; and each time I found him wide awake.

At last the hour struck. My son left the house earlier than ever, in order to go to the teacher in the bazaar. When it was close upon the hour of our midday meal the boy had not yet returned home. When he was more than an hour late I sent Ganesh, our oldest servant, to look for the boy in the bazaar. But the old man returned and told me that the Sadhu was no longer there. In fear and trembling I myself went thither and asked the people whom I met there, and the people in the shops, news of my son and the wandering monk. They told me that the monk had left the place hours before, and then of a sudden I knew, as though the gods themselves had given me the dreadful news, that my son was lost to me. At the rail-gharri [1] I learned that the Sadhu, accompanied by my son, had been seen to board a train. Further inquiry was fruitless; my husband sought the help of the police, in order to discover the whereabouts of the wandering pair, but they had disappeared without leaving a trace, and we never again heard of either.

In my misery I went out to the Serpent's Grove, where dwelt a holy man, a venerable

[1] Railway-station.

Sanyassi, and begged him to ask help of the gods, so that my child should be given back to me. He, however, rebuked me, because of my grief, saying that it was God's will that my son was lost to me in this earthly life. It would be a sin did I even lift a finger to interfere with Karma. What could be higher than a life in union with God! Siva had ordained that the Sadhu should visit the town, and it was Siva's decree that my son should renounce the world in his early youth, in order that he might find Him in a monastery, in a holy life of meditation and resignation. I obeyed the priest's injunctions; I abandoned my search for the boy, but at night I lamented my lost child, and I saw how his loss grieved my husband also.

So two years went by, and then the cholera came to our town, and my husband was stricken down and lay upon a sick-bed. In vain did I nurse him day and night; on the fourth morning, before the first rays of the sun had flooded the earth, he died, and I was alone. Then came the legal authorities, and the *vakil*[1] informed me that my husband had left a will which would enable me to live without anxiety and independent of my uncle. But of what use was all that money to a wretched woman like myself? He whom I loved more than all in the world, to whom I had sacrificed the gods of my childhood, was now no more, and our son was far away in some unknown land. In my desolation and bewilderment I wondered as to what I should

[1] Notary.

do. At first I was tempted by the thought of seeking death by my own hand, so that at least I should be at one with the dead and the world of spirits. But the gods would not have it so. One day I went again to the Serpent's Grove, where a little temple, dedicated to the goddess Durga,[1] stood beside the monastery of the Sanyassis, and there I bared the anguish of my soul to the Almighty and All-merciful. When I had ended my prayer and was about to leave the grove, I met the priest whom I had sought out on the day when my child was lost. He took me with him to his cell, and there for a long while he addressed me with consoling words. But of all that he told me only one thing took hold upon my mind, and these words were as though written in letters of fire: 'Leave this city; give all that you possess to the needy, and pass through the land from village to village as a poor nun, and you will find your child again on the open road, while you still wear the livery in which you go hence.' So I gathered together all my wealth and gave it to the head of the Hindu community, requesting that at the daily sacrifice to the goddess Kali my prayers for the return of my child should be offered up. And that very night I left the town wearing the yellow cloak of the penitent, with the beggar's bowl and the *vina*.

Since then many years have elapsed. I have been to Benares, to Gaya, high up in the snow-

[1] Another name for the goddess Kali; one of her *Sakti* (a manifestation of the god Siva)

clad region of the Himalaya, where foreign folk with alien customs dwell; I have wandered through the swamps of Assam, and it is strange how Siva has led me through the dark forests of those parts where the *bhag*[1] has his dwelling and the *naga*[2] conceals himself in the scorching dust. I have wandered through the heights of the Ghats, and through the inhospitable forests of the Vinhyas and across the sandy wastes of the Punjab, to the wild ravines of Beluchistan and Afghanistan, everywhere singing my songs and searching for my child. But I no longer go in fear and trembling, for as the years go by my certainty increases that he is living and that I shall find him. Then together we shall wander through the world singing the praises of Siva."

I listened to the words of this strange woman as though they had been a fairy tale. Her eyes shone in pious ecstasy, and in her voice there vibrated so joyous a hope that I was almost converted to her faith in Karma. When she had finished I bowed humbly before her and begged her to bless me. She laid her hand upon my head and made certain predictions, some of which have been fulfilled in the passage of the years, while others may still attain to fulfilment:

"And you too will be forced to eat of Karma's bitter fruit; for you too the hour will strike when you will be forced to leave this country,

[1] Tiger. [2] Giant snake = one of the pythons.

in which you yourself were born, in an earlier existence, only to wander to and fro in cold and alien climes. But it is also your Karma that you will not die on alien soil. When the period of your suffering is over you will return again to this country in order to die in this your home."

Strange, mysterious woman! How marvellously, up to this present, have your words been fulfilled! War and human folly drove me out of that beloved land into the cold North, where I wander to and fro like a stranger—although to all seeming I am here amongst my own people—unknown and misunderstood; always full of longing, always homesick, for that country which alone, in the fullest sense of the word, is my home. And as I firmly believe in the immutable laws of Karma, so do I believe in your words of good augury, that tell me that I shall return, whether to the bustling capital of India, or the pleasant Malabar coast, or the majestic silence of the jungle, far from all human kind, there to lay myself down to rest.

The sun was sinking; one brief hour and night would invade the vast jungle-covered plain. The herd-boys were driving their goats and buffalo across the river. From the village came women and girls, singing and gossiping, to draw from the river, in their brown earthenware pitchers, water for their household; above the huts and houses of the village, on the farther bank of the river, a blue smoke curled lazily

upwards, blending with the dark blue of the heavens, while Palghatti, throned high upon her rock, was still glittering in the dying rays of the sun. The wandering nun rose to her feet, took leave of me, and went her way, singing a sacred hymn, toward the little city, there to spend the night, and on the following day to resume her wandering quest of her son.

Years have passed since that curious encounter. Here I sit in my room, in a northern city; in the street without the streams of motor-cars and lorries are rushing past the houses, until the very walls quiver. But my thoughts are wandering thousands of miles away, far across the ocean, and across my beloved India; and in my ears sounds the song of the mother, who, in all humility, and full of silent confidence, is searching the highways of the world for her lost child.

THE CURSE OF THE KURUMBA

IT WAS IN THE TIME of the famine, when for the first time I drove through the scorching heat of noontide along the dusty streets of Jhemadi to the village of Songir. Famine! What a terrible picture the word recalls to one's memory! Half-naked people whose bare bodies are covered with dust, and whose skin hangs loosely upon their limbs like shrivelled leather; whose eyes are deeply sunken in their sockets, stupidly watching the approach of death, so thin that not a muscle of their bodies is still visible; wearily staggering along the jungle paths, covered in dust, or lying down in the roadway, powerless to walk another step; mothers with withered breasts bearing in their arms lamentable little creatures vainly seeking nourishment. Here and there, beside a clump of cactus, lies the malodorous corpse of one who has fallen by the wayside, whose failing feet could carry him no farther on his way to the nearest relief-station, where grain was meted out to the starving people. In those days I saw, with my own eyes, for the first time, how human beings who are driven by hunger will even grub up the soil beneath their feet and swallow it, having mixed it with water. Some twenty to thirty miles in

the burning sun these unhappy people had wandered, from village to village, seeking for food, but finding nothing. The cactus-bushes, which at this time of the year would normally be covered with their red succulent fruit, now stand bare, for the food that used to be thrown to the cattle had been plucked by human beings, in order to still the pangs of hunger.

My way led along the banks of a great river, but the river-bed lay dry, and the white boulders shimmered in the blazing sunlight, until one's eyes smarted in the glare. The houses of the village lay amidst a grove of mango-trees. The road became broader in proportion as we approached the village. On either side of it aloes and cactus-bushes stood like a hedge. Even if one had not seen the monotonous grey mud walls of the outlying, tumble-down huts of the village, the horrible stench along the highway would have betrayed its presence hundreds of yards before the village was reached. No Indian village possesses even the most primitive sanitary arrangements, so that the inhabitants go, morning and evening, to obey the call of nature along the public highway on either side of the village, where, during the long sunny day, the scorching heat distils the most pestilential stench. Apart from this disadvantage, which Songir possesses in common with all the villages and smaller towns of India, one might perhaps call it an attractive village. It lies on a river which, except in the very hottest season of the year, is full of limpid water.

It is true that on the day in question the river-bed was dry, save that on the farther side, where palm-trees and an undergrowth of bushes bent low over the river bank, a scanty rivulet still wound its way amidst the white boulders. A few days more, perhaps, and this too would disappear. The road to Jhemadi turns aside beyond the farther end of the village, in the direction of Aulia, that stands on a hill, barely visible to the unaided eye. All round the village lay fields of maize and cotton, but the grain had not ripened, and stood unharvested, grey and withered, in the parched and fissured soil, and the lower pods of the cotton-bushes lay low upon the ground, withered and unblown. All around was still as death, and beyond the area of cultivated land the boundless jungle lay outspread beneath the blue-grey heavens; save that here and there, like an oasis, stood a green clump of trees, or one lone stunted palm. The village was surrounded by a tall growth of cactus, intended to prevent the cattle from breaking loose. The village itself was divided in accordance with all other villages of its kind. First of all came the Brahmin village: that is, the part in which the Hindus and the higher castes live in their tiny houses. The fronts of such houses are limewashed, white or red; on the small verandah is a raised platform of dried clay, which serves as a bench, and in the centre of the verandah stands a small altar, some three feet in height. These houses were built about a tall, shady, pipul-tree. This was the Indian

equivalent of the village green, where, of an evening, when the day's work was done, the men of the village collected to pass the time in gossiping or singing, or in playing games of skill or chance. Here a scrupulous cleanliness prevailed, and on certain feast-days the verandah, and a great part of the ground before each house, was adorned with wonderful and artistic designs, which the diligent housewife made by scattering powdered chalk on the ground. The side walls of the houses were covered with circular cakes of cow-dung. These were destined to be burned as fuel, as we burn peat, or once a week, mixed into a paste with water, they are spread, by the housewife, over the inner walls and the floor of the house. Songir presents one peculiarity which we should not find elsewhere; all the trees and bushes around the village, and especially those along the highway, are hung with tattered children's coats of every description. Later on I learned the meaning of this display.

Distant from the village about twice as far as a stone could be thrown, farther upstream, where the river makes a bend, there stand, surrounded by thorn-bushes, some ten or a dozen miserable huts. In them dwell the Djammars, whose trade—the tanner's—is so abject that they may not even live in the pariah village, which lies facing the Brahmin quarter, divided from it by a ditch which is filled with every conceivable kind of filth. For centuries and centuries, in every Hindu village such a ditch

has formed the impassable division between the men of caste and the "Untouchables." A pariah village is always a pitiful sight, but at the time of my visit, when the place was in the grip of famine, what I saw was enough to break one's heart.

Destitution, stupefied bewilderment and the gnawing of hunger were visible in the emaciated faces of the villagers. Adults and children crept about with their eyes resting on the ground. The famine was upon them, in company with disease in all its varieties. Their bodies were covered with eruptions, and the suppurating eyelids of the children were covered with mango-flies.

At other times the village gave the impression of a certain degree of industry. From the huts came the rattle of the weaver's loom, or the singing of the women at their grindstones, and in the open space on which the village centred some women were spinning yarn for the looms. But now one marked no life or movement; men and women alike sat before their huts in silent despair, waiting for a miracle that would not come. Many of the huts were half ruined, so that one could see the greyish-brown inner walls. Children and mangy dogs were rummaging in the filth of the evil-smelling ditches for anything they could find in the shape of food. I shall never forget one horrible picture: On the way to Songir one of my bullocks fell lame, and next day, when we wished to continue our journey, he was dead. I was therefore compelled to spend some days in the neighbour-

hood, until my servant had brought me a fresh bullock from the nearest town. We left the dead bullock on the river-bank, well aware that there was no need to bury the carcase. Dogs and jackals, ravens and vultures, and even the ants, would dispose of it in a single night. But next morning, when I went down to the river-bank, in order to wash at a place where the trickle of water had made a tiny pool, a horrible spectacle awaited me. There was a group of villagers at the spot where we had left the dead bullock. These were the pariahs of the village, quarrelling over the carcase. By now the sun was high in the heavens, and the stench of putrefaction was already perceptible. Brawling and struggling, the stronger were driving back the weaker with blows and curses, and tearing the flesh from the carcase. Behind them were the dogs, yellow, lean and famished, their tongues hanging from their mouths, trying to snatch a scrap of meat. High in the trees the crows were perched. In less than an hour the bones were stripped bare, and nothing was left on the river-bank but the evil-smelling entrails. The dogs fell upon these, and the vultures now came flocking up, drawn hither from the blue heavens, but whence no one knows, fluttering down upon the carcase and disputing with dogs and crows the malodorous relics, as though following the example of the men and women who even yet were loitering on the bank. During the night the stench attracted the jackals, and we heard the gruesome sound of

their hoarse and hungry baying, and again one seemed to hear the sound of wrangling voices in the dark of the night. Since then I have seen Songir again, in happier times, and learned to love the little backwoods village.

There is a Catholic mission church at Songir; the mission-house is surrounded by a garden, which borders immediately upon the river. It is whitewashed, and has an ugly roof of corrugated iron. Beside it is a poor-looking bungalow. But the church and the missionary's bungalow are almost always closed; only once a month a Catholic Father comes to Songir in order to celebrate Mass and instruct the native Christians. No Hindu of the Brahmin village has ever entered the little church or presented himself for instruction, but when the little bell rings in the rickety tower, and the body of the church is filled to suffocation with pariahs, they come and consider the proceedings. The converts of Songir are not the best of Christians; but for the fact that after each service the Father distributes a few handfuls of coppers among the congregation, while the mission, at the season for sowing grain, lends the people seed-corn wherewith to sow their meagre fields, the church would doubtless be as good as empty. Most of the Christians are baptized at least three or four times over, for the American Methodists also send their missionaries to Songir now and again, when a lively battle of words ensues over the precious souls of the villagers. I had a talk with the village barber, who told me the

history of his conversion as the most natural thing imaginable. In the first place, since he was hard pressed by his creditors, he allowed himself to be baptized as a Catholic, though when, a little later, a Protestant missionary arrived and gave him some money, he began to take the greatest interest in St. Paul. But as the money was quickly spent, he was seized with repentance in respect of his apostasy, and when the Catholic priest again appeared he once more sought the doors of St. Peter, for the Catholic Father gave him rather more than the Methodist had given. So it went on from month to month, one shepherd of souls outbidding the other, and at the time when I had my conversation with the barber—who, incidentally, bore the fragrant name of Ullagaddi, which being interpreted is Sweet Onion—he was again a Methodist.

As chance would have it, on the very next day both missionaries visited the field of their labours simultaneously, and preached, at opposite sides of the same place of assembly. Father Abraham a Santa Clara, would have covered his head with confusion had he been present; the one made disgraceful remarks concerning the whore of Babylon, and told the nastiest stories of the lives of the Popes; the other spoke of Luther as a lascivious swine, the son of a whore; and similar flattering phrases flowed in an inexhaustible stream from the lips of both these shepherds of men. Such performances, alas! —such as bring a blush to the face of a true

Christian—are by no means rare. Despite all the zeal of the missionaries as regards the spiritual health of their converts, the very lambs who listened to the Christian Gospel of salvation so piously and devoutly, reverted, as soon as the missionaries turned their backs upon the village, to their pagan gods, and brought their offerings to the red-painted stake that stood at the entrance to the village.

The Catholic mission even maintained a school in Songir. The teacher was typical of the period of Pestalozzi, and his utter incapacity for any respectable handicraft was reckoned a sufficient indication of his vocation. The worthy master knew the Paternoster and the Ave Maria, the Creed and the Ten Commandments, and the five additional Commandments of the Church, and he was able, laboriously and with difficulty, to decipher the First Reader, beginning with the A B C. He knew many of the beautiful hymns of the Church, but he knew even more of the old pagan hymns and tales of the old pagan gods; and when, after nightfall, the people of the pariah village were squatting round the fire and holding their *tamasha*,[1] and he was requested to sing a song about Queen Gunapati, his eyes would glisten and he would uplift his voice more heartily than ever in the church when singing the Christian hymns.

A similar type was the barber already mentioned. He was one of the most amusing

[1] *Tamasha* = sing-song, spectacle, game, entertainment; and by implication a loud noise, a squabble, etc.—TRANSLATOR.

fellows I have ever met. A most versatile person; a pious Hindu when invited to Hindu festivities in the Brahmin's houses; a zealous reformer in the presence of the American clergy, and one of the most pious of Catholics, to judge by his use of the rosary. But his greatest devotion was to toddy, and every penny he could lay hands on was spent in buying palm brandy. I never saw him really in the full possession of his faculties, although I spent more than a week in Songir. Heaven knows that one could not call him handsome; at the same time, he was not precisely ugly. The fundamental geniality that possessed him found expression in his face, so that even his several features seemed almost good to look upon. His forehead was low and his eyes large out of all proportion; sometimes when he laughed his mouth stretched almost from ear to ear, and at such times he revealed all his betel-red teeth, which were pointed like the teeth of a saw. He told me that this had been done by his parents on the advice of a *pujari* in order to cure him of a sickness. His head was concealed in a turban which must have been wound for the last time years before I saw him, and whose original colour could not be detected. It was grey, indeed almost black, with dust and perspiration, and his waist-cloth was no more than a filthy rag, which served him not only for wiping his face and as a handkerchief, but also as a dish-cloth. Once too I visited the little school; it was on the day when the missionaries

were expected, and some ten little imps were squatting against the wall in front of the schoolmaster. He was singing the letters of the alphabet, beating time with his stick:—A-a-ah—B-e-eh—K-a-ah, etc.—and the children bellowed in response until their little throats swelled like overloaded hosepipes. Goats, kids, cocks and hens ran in and out of the schoolroom unmolested. Only when the *bunnia's* donkey came to join us did the master strike him a blow on the hindquarters and order him out. He was followed by a barber, who sat himself down, as though he wanted to join in the lesson. First he conjured from one corner of his greasy waist-cloth a little snuff-box, from which he took a pinch of powdered lime and a few cloves. Thereupon the schoolmaster and the barber chewed in brotherly communion these ingredients of the betel-quid; and after a while the barber scratched himself on one hip, pulled his waist-cloth a little forward, and searched in perfect equanimity for his tormentor. Over and over again the thumb and forefinger of his right hand sought their prey in vain, but at last they closed upon it, and the evil-doer was executed on a slate that lay before the master—it was indeed the only one in the school.

There was only one thing that spoiled one's pleasure in Songir: this was the number of snakes that existed there. It seemed to me wonderful that in all the time of my stay there no one died of snake-bite, for these vermin were simply everywhere. One day I found one on

my *pallam*,[1] under the blanket; I could not put my shoes on in the morning without first looking under the bed to make sure that no snake was lurking there. I encountered snakes on my way to the river; I found them crawling about in the ruins of the deserted huts. Snakes of every kind were there, large and small, from the terrible cobra to the packthread snake. Even in a nest of white ants, some dozen yards from the place where I had pitched my little tent, a cobra had made his home, and I often saw it towards nightfall creeping out of some hole in the ant-hill, and slinking into the thicket near by, in order to seek its prey during the night. I mentioned it to the *patel*,[2] who, in order to do me a favour, promised to send me a fakir, who would not drive the snake away, but would take it away with him. It was then that I first saw the wonderful poison fangs of the cobra. The fakir sent for was a man of perhaps forty years of age, and a Moslem. His beard was dyed red; and if he had not been addicted to his mysterious vocation, I should have found him quite a likeable person, for there was a clear friendly ring about his voice, and his conversation was cheerful and full of ingenious twists and turns. He was clad in a coat of many colours, a flame-coloured turban, and a red waist-cloth. Over his shoulder he carried a bamboo staff, one end of which

[1] A bedstead; about a foot in height, three feet in breadth, and four in length, strung with coco-nut fibre; not large enough for a full grown man to stretch himself out on, and serving as something to sit on, rather than as a bed.

[2] The village headman or elder.

supported a sack, and an earthen pot, whose mouth was closed by a cloth containing a number of small holes; at the other end were two further pots with similar covers. The village headman led him to the hedge at the entrance to the village; and there the fakir began his work. From his bag he extracted a small flute with a gourd attached as resonator, and playing on this a melody in the highest treble he went slowly along the hedge, covering some three or four times a stretch of perhaps thirty paces. He then took up his position beside a hole in the hedge, before which the fine, smoothly levelled sand had been somewhat disturbed, thus betraying the presence of a snake, and here he placed one of the earthen pots, and he himself squatted down before it and began to play. He not only knew that there was a snake in the hole before him, but also what sort of snake it was. Moreover, a pot which he had placed before the hole contained a snake of the same species.

At first I had supposed that the tones of his flute were the means by which he enticed his snakes. I will offer no opinion as to whether snakes are peculiarly sensitive to music. The principal factor in the catching of snakes is the scent of the snake contained in the pot, which attracts other snakes. After perhaps five minutes such another snake crept out of the hole, but did not approach the pot; it immediately made its way to another hole, which lay perhaps a foot distant from the first, and communicated

with the same burrow. The fakir made no attempt to stop it until it was in the act of slipping into the second hole. Then, just as its tail was disappearing, he seized it, and with a single jerk dragged it back to a distance of perhaps a yard from the hole, and then, with outstretched arm, held it away from his body, so that it hung, stiff and straight, incapable of movement. Now, with his unoccupied hand, he pushed the cloth stretched across the mouth of the pot a little to one side, held the pot close to the head of the suspended snake, and swiftly pushed the latter into the pot. There was a rustling sound, and then silence. He told me that snakes, like men, thought a great deal of caste; if he had placed a snake of a different kind in the pot there would have been a fight, whose issue would have been fatal to one of the two combatants.

In this fashion the fakir went from bush to bush, and in all extracted eighteen snakes from the hedge. But as for the cobra in the white ant's nest, this he seemed wilfully to disregard, nor did the headman seem anxious to press the matter. The whole village was aware of its presence there, and it did no one any harm, while at certain times the villagers brought it milk and other offerings in coco-nut shells. It would have meant still more work for our fakir; but he said he had no more room in his pots; and having received a couple of rupees in payment, he took his leave. This fakir told me how those snakes were trained that are shown

in the bazaars, dancing to the music of the flute. He told me also that the snakes that are seen to bite their trainers, inflicting apparently deadly wounds, possess in reality no poison glands. He accompanied his explanation of this obvious fact with a preliminary demonstration, and while I could admire the simplicity of the method, I had not the courage to imitate the fakir.

Songir is proud to have as its nearest neighbour a little market town in which a market is held once a fortnight. Anyone who wishes to obtain an insight into the lives of these simple folk cannot do better than attend the market in any of these little towns of the interior. Bandwa lies at a distance of about four miles from Songir, on the opposite bank of the river. There are no bridges across the river, so that in the rainy season the two populations are completely cut off from one another. In the summer, however, as soon as the depth of the river decreases, the people look about for a shallow place, and cross it by wading up to their knees in water. On market-days hardly a soul can be found in the villages round Bandwa, as only the very old folk stay at home; for even the little children go forth to enjoy the splendours of the market, riding astride on their mother's right hip. In the great cities, where European trade and industry have already found a footing, the genuine, indigenous life of the ancient Hindu people can no longer be observed; the spell is broken; but in the smaller towns, with their ten to fifteen thousand

inhabitants, the whole complex of their ancient arts and crafts of India is centred upon the *Mela*.

Bandwa is already what we might call an emancipated town; for it possesses a Government school. The school building consists of a long whitewashed structure surrounded by a verandah. The pillars of the verandah, and the walls, as high as the urchins can reach, are brown in colour, since, in the process of blowing the nose, not merely is that which comes away removed with the fingers, but the fingers are wiped on the wall. Only then is anything remaining wiped away with the corner of the waist-cloth. In spite of the great progress denoted by the fact that English is taught in the upper classes, the school is still so conservative that no Sudra has yet been granted admission to the *alma mater*. In the eyes of the law all castes are equally entitled to enjoy the advantages of European teaching; but were a Sudra actually to venture to enter the classroom, the pupils of the higher castes, and the teachers, would, under protest, leave the room. The lower castes have accordingly set up a school for themselves, housed in a miserable hovel. To-day, as I write these lines, the national consciousness must have permeated even Bandwa, so that "Touchables" and "Untouchables" alike must now be looking to the accomplishment of the same purpose, and are doubtless taught, if not on the same bench, yet in the same room, and by the same teacher. In addition to its school,

Bandwa boasts of a dispensary (with a native physician), and next door to the dispensary is a small building containing ten iron bedsteads, known as the hospital, whose walls were on sanitary grounds besmeared with tar. Facing the hospital, on the same side as the police *tana*, is a building that displays over the door the proud title of "General Store." There you may buy anything and everything: strongly scented toilet soaps, paraffin oil, patent medicines, biscuits, and the inevitable, accursed Dittmar lamp, which during the whole of my stay in India cost me more annoyance and vexation of spirit than all the lice, scorpions and snakes put together, because for me it was so absolutely typical of shoddy European trash.

The real market is held outside the town, between the town and the suburbs. There the vendors squat side by side, leaving two or three lanes open to the buyers, with their different wares spread out on the ground before them. Here sits a woman with a dozen *brinjols* [1] in an old *sari*; she may have come ten miles through the jungle, and her wares may have been the only things available for sale in her native village. Where then is the joy and excitement of market-day? A man stops before her, fingers her goods, and after protracted haggling they come to an agreement, and he buys a couple of her *brinjols* for the sum of four cowries.[2]

[1] Egg plants.

[2] 1 rupee = 16 annas; 1 anna = 12 peisa; 1 peisa = 3 pice; 1 pie = 48 cowries.

All the herbs and fruits and vegetables that go to make a Hindu dinner may be found in this market; and those most in demand are the strongly flavoured wares: chilies, red and green, gherkins, pumpkins, melons; salt; and fish, dried and salted, or fresh from the water; crayfish too; but only rarely does one find potatoes, which are so dear that the peasant can afford to eat them only once a year. Bananas too, which we at home suppose to be so plentiful that one may pluck them leaning from one's window, are seldom found in the market; they are sent to the larger towns. Here sits a Bonja or a Marwari[1] selling grain, both unmilled and in the shape of meal or flour; but the native, taught by experience, prefers to buy his corn unground, since a good third of the flour sold may consist of powdered chalk. And yonder, at a certain distance, so that those of different faith may not be defiled by his touch, is a Moslem with a tent, who is offering for sale the flesh of an aged bullock. It is a feast-day for the weaver or the tanner if he can manage to buy but a pound of the meat, which will cost him no more than an anna, whose pre-war value was a penny. The butchers are always Moslems, even those who deal in goat's flesh, although goat's flesh is lawful for the higher castes.

Now we come to two booths more hotly besieged than the rest. In one the confectioner sits enthroned. And what magnificent treasures

[1] A Hindu from the Mahratta country.

lie before him! Sweet-smelling golden-yellow *chlebis*,[1] fresh drawn from the steaming butter, baked *holawas*[2] and sweetmeats of every kind, made of milk and sugar, with perhaps an addition of coco-nut. Most, of course, have to content themselves merely with gazing. There too stands my barber; I can read the conflict taking place in his mind, as to whether it would be better to buy of these glories or to spend his hard-earned money at the end of the market-place, where the toddy-kettle lurks enticingly in an open tent. For two annas he can get a whole glass of good strong spirit, enough to enable him to forget that he is only a poor village barber. Such a glorious drink would cost him two annas; but it is wonderful what one can buy in this market for two annas. For example, enough salt and spices and vegetables for a whole week; for the villager's wants are extremely modest as regards his diet, which year in, year out, consists of little more than a couple of *chupattis*,[3] which his wife bakes of an evening in the ashes of the fire, and which have to be kept for the following evening's meal. And what a man has to do to earn those two annas! In every village there are weavers and tanners. A weaver takes perhaps a week to make a *dhoti* some seven yards in length. If he sells the stuff in the market-place of Bandwa he receives for it an average price of one rupee. Of this he spends twelve annas

[1] Honey-snaps. [2] Doughnuts.
[3] Cakes baked of black maize.

immediately, for he has to buy fresh yarn. This leaves him with four annas, of which we may be sure that two go to the creditor who is at the same time the customer for his wares, as interest upon old loans. He has then two annas left for salt, spices and vegetables—or for spirits. It is no great cause of wonder if the poor devil chooses the alcohol, with all its impurities, which brings him a happy oblivion, if only for a brief period.

The second booth, which is favoured by the same crowd of customers, is that of the quack-salver or dealer in patent medicines. In crazy disorder, the ground is covered with empty bottles, small tin boxes of every size, and flasks possessed of talismans of stupendous magical powers; and here are old gilt-framed pictures of Indian divinities; indeed, in convents and hermitages, I have come across pictures of Christian saints published by the firm of Benzig. And here are *malamams*[1] — made of berries found in the jungle—large or small, and spectacles, blue, green and yellow, and empty boxes, etc., etc. But the most interesting object is the man himself. Chains without number are slung round his neck; his long beard is dyed red, and on the knuckles of both hands are charms against all possible maladies. He is also a soothsayer, and often enough the simple peasant from the jungle gets heavily into debt in order that he may repair to the soothsayer to find a medicine for his woes. Wherever I

[1] Rosaries.

went the barber followed me, and when I asked him—we were standing then before the quack-salver's booth—which of all these wonderful things he would wish most to possess, he pointed to a pair of spectacles with lenses of rectangular form. It is true that both the side-pieces, which pass behind the ears, in order to hold the spectacles in place, had disappeared, for which reason two loops of twine had been fastened to this optical relic. I bought it for the stupendous price of four annas. I cannot find words to describe the barber's delight. On the following day he seemed to pervade the whole village, strolling to and fro with spectacles on nose. I felt inclined to ask him whether he had given the glazier a sleeping-draught and was trying to capture his business.

And now through the crowd the inevitable beggars pushed their way, pleading for alms in a lamentable tone of voice; many of them with horrible maimed or mangled limbs, which they held close under one's nose. One woman came up to me who was absolutely naked; her hair, smothered in dust, hung in wisps about her face. She was leprous from head to foot, yet was giving suck to a poor little wretch of an infant.

There is no lack of lepers all over India, and in front of every shop where food of any kind is sold beggars and lepers will be seen squatting together, pleading for charity. Now and again they fight a little, or some poor devil whose hunger has made him forgetful of the difference between mine and thine lays

hands upon another's property. Then the Law steps in, on clattering wooden sandals, with white uniform and red turban, in the shape of a native soldier or a policeman; brandishing his rubber truncheon, he pushes his way into the screeching crowd, and removes the poor devil, who throws himself on the ground before him, pleading and lamenting, and locks him up in a wooden cage at the *thana* or police-station.

And so gradually the day wears on. Toward nightfall, men and women, sellers and buyers, pack up their goods in an old *dhoti* or *sari*, and go their several ways through the jungle. Not until late in the night, when only the twinkling stars remain to show them the way, do they at last reach their native villages, greeted by the barking of the dogs, crazy with joy at their return, which mingles with the plaintive howling of the jackals far out in the jungle.

Once, when I was making my solitary way back to Songir in the darkness of night, I saw a light not far from the spot where the highway turns aside from the road to Bandwa. The light was a little farther along the road, and on rising ground. There lived the Kurumba, concerning whom so many curious tales were told in the village, so that I had long wished to know something of this remarkable person. What was the solitary doing so late in the night? I made up my mind that I would look him up on the morrow.

His hut stood on a rocky prominence that overhung the river. A thick growth of bushes

covered the steep rock, but higher up there was a clearing. The hut was built leaning against a rocky wall, and the roof was covered with climbing gourd-vines. Even from outside the hut one could see that a low doorway led into the bowels of the rock. On the left-hand side of the leaf-covered entry was a bench of sun-dried clay. From this point one could look far up and down the river, until it disappeared behind a dense grove of banyan-trees. Just over the way, on the other side of the river, lay Songir. The Kurumba was sitting on the bench, pulling at a hookah that stood on the ground before him, from which he now and again peacefully inhaled the blue smoke. He must have seen me as I approached his hut, but behaved as though I was so much empty air. I greeted him, but received no answer beyond a slight nod of the head. Without further invitation, I seated myself before him, with crossed legs and folded hands, as good manners prescribed, waiting till he should address me. I may have sat there about ten minutes, but he still vouchsafed me not a word. Finally he placed the pipe on the bench, and turned round bodily in the direction of the village, almost as though his intention was to turn away from me. His eyes gazed, with an untroubled expression, at something above and beyond the village, at something infinitely distant, as though he were watching something very far away.

At last, when I had asked him to excuse my pertinacity, and was about to rise to my feet

and leave him, he addressed me, without responding to my words of greeting, with the query: "What wouldst thou?" With this he turned to look at me, and I received the impression that this man could dismiss me with a single glance, so unyielding and so penetrating was his gaze. His eyes were grey, and not a movement, not a gleam could I see in them that betrayed the nature of his secret emotions. His grey hair mingled with his beard, which, parted down the centre, fell over his chest. The upper part of his body was wrapped in a yellow shawl, carelessly thrown over his shoulders; his *dhoti* was exiguous, displaying his legs, which were covered with varicose veins. His hands were small and bony. All things considered, he was a man to inspire one with fear rather than with confidence. In order to conceal and overcome my embarrassment, I began to tell him how I had come to Songir, where I came from, whither I was going, and as far as it seemed to me advisable, what had induced me to visit him. At last I found courage to interlard my gossip with a few questions. He answered me in a hesitating manner, but told me nothing of himself, his doings and his past life. Suddenly he rose as though to make an end of my visit, picked up his water-pipe, entered the hut, and disappeared through the door that must have led into a rock-chamber behind the hut. However, after a brief interval he returned, carrying a marble goblet, which he set before me; it contained

that favourite Hindu beverage, mango-bass.[1] I gladly accepted this mark of hospitality, and now at last his tongue was loosed.

He told me that he had not always lived there, but had come from a great distance; though now he would always remain there. But as to where he came from, and why, and for what reason he had settled in that neighbourhood, he would tell me nothing, and from the uniformly expressionless tone of voice in which he told his story I realized that any questions were useless. After perhaps an hour I took leave of him and returned to the village. But at night, when the men were sitting on the ground under the nim-trees, smoking their water-pipes and talking of this or that in confidential undertones, of the drought, of the spectres and spirits which dwell in the trees around the village, of the taxes, and the Collector-Sahib, who had visited the village a fortnight earlier, I then heard from the lips of the headman as much or as little as the people of those parts knew or conjectured concerning the Kurumba. Five years earlier, shortly before the beginning of the rainy season, he appeared one evening in the village, and asked the men, who then, as now, were seated round the Indian equivalent of the village green, whether he might take shelter in the hut over yonder. He said nothing of his intention to make a long stay, and the villagers supposed that he merely wished to remain there until the

[1] The juice of the mango, expelled by pressure and mixed with sugar.

rains were over. But the summer came, and again the rainy season, and again the summer, and still the Kurumba remained. One day the headman went into the market-town to pay to the proper authority the taxes which he had collected from his villagers, and took this opportunity of looking up one of his relatives who kept a draper's shop in the bazaar. It was then that he heard for the first time something about the Kurumba. He had once lived in a hermit's cell outside the town; and every morning he entered the town and went from house to house asking alms. The people gave him all that he required, for, although they knew no more of him than met their eyes, they none the less appeared to be afraid of him. As though by chance he acquired the name of miracle-worker, and was often summoned to the houses of the Brahmins when anyone fell sick, and it was a fact that they commonly recovered. One day the Kurumba, turning out of the bazaar, went down the street in which the Feringhis[1] live. There he went through the open gate into the garden lying before the house of the police-inspector, who was a Moslem; and there, standing at the foot of the steps, he held out his alms-bowl, and begged for alms. The Subadhar's[2] servant was just about to descend the steps and give the Kurumba his alms when the Inspector himself came round the corner of the house. The Subadhar harshly ordered

[1] Foreigners: the derivation of the word is Portuguese.
[2] Inspector.

the servant back, and demanded of the Kurumba how he came to be in the garden, and bade him be off, or he would be locked up in the *thana*. The Kurumba looked the Inspector up and down with such a terrible expression that the policeman drew back; he then turned about and made his way between the flower-beds into the street. There he stood still, and facing the Inspector's house he uttered a curse: "Accursed be thou and thine house! May the earth swallow thee and thine!" And with that he gathered up a handful of dust from the road and threw it high overhead, so that it was blown away in a little cloud. "And never again shall sleep descend upon thee!" The Inspector did not appear to be alarmed; he laughed at the threat, and as the Kurumba still stood his ground, he went into the house and returned armed with a stick, and approached the fakir, but before he could reach him the fakir turned about and went down the street, back to the bazaar. The servants and the Inspector's women-folk trembled at the thought of the Kurumba's curse; but the more they betrayed their anxiety, the more the Subadhar endeavoured, by scornful and derisive remarks concerning the fakir, to overcome the fear lurking in his own heart. Next morning the Inspector's son, a boy of perhaps ten years of age, could not rise from his bed; he lay there whimpering and groaning, writhing in agony, powerless to answer the anxious questions of the terrified mother and father. His tongue was paralysed, but one could see how terribly

he suffered. Over and over again he shrieked so loud that the passers-by stopped in the street, shocked and alarmed. On the same day the rumour spread through the town that the Inspector's child had been ill-wished and would die unless the Kurumba would change his curse into a blessing. Day and night the Inspector watched by his child's bedside and called in all the doctors of the town, but none could give any help. The child was unable to say where the pain was, and refused all nourishment. The father's face grew haggard and his gaze wandered. He went out past the suburbs to where the fakir had his solitary hut. He threatened him, but the Kurumba sat there as though no one else had been present. Then the father prostrated himself in the dust at the fakir's feet, and begged him for mercy, for compassion; but the heart of the insulted Kurumba was not softened, and his gaze seemed to pass over the pleading man and to fix itself upon nothingness. At the end of a week the boy died, although the father's prayers had brought a white physician from the capital. When the child was carried on his white bier to the burying-place of the Moslems, his father cried out in such wise that those who heard him shuddered. Every night he went out to the burying-ground and there wept and lamented. He could no longer sleep, and at last he came to believe that he was followed everywhere by ravens, that fluttered around him and would not be driven away. When he sat

down to eat, almost compelled thereto by his wife's pleading, he would spring to his feet again, run out of the house, into the garden, or the town, and would remain away for hours, seeing nothing but ravens on every side, awaiting to tear him to pieces with their greedy bills. Finally the Inspector was taken to the *Bhagl-Kana*[1] house, having become quite crazy, and there he may be found to-day, and may be heard shrieking of a night. Then the authorities took the matter up, and one day two police-wallahs[2] went to the Kurumba's house to arrest him, but they found it shut up. The Kurumba had disappeared.

After many hardships he had succeeded in escaping to the wild ravines of the Ghats; in the daytime he lived in some deserted hut outside a village, or took refuge with the pious inhabitants of villages that had no police-station. Having reached the Ghats he joined a gang of Lumbadei,[3] whose leader was his brother, and from the secret messengers whom his brother surreptitiously sent into the city, he learned that the Sirkar[4] had dropped its legal proceedings against him, because it could obtain no evidence. He accordingly left the smugglers, and after long

[1] Madhouse.

[2] The word *wallah* is often employed in India as a suffix to the name of a man's vocation. Alone it usually bears the meaning of "fellow" or "chap" or "man": for example, *dhobi-wallah* signifies washerman; police-wallah = policeman or police officer; while ye-wallah = this or that fellow.

[3] Nomads who smuggle goods, principally salt, along the Ghats and down to Travancore.

[4] Government.

journeying through the Deccan, he came to Songir, appeared one night in the rainy season in the public place of the village, and was assigned the hut in which he now dwells.

What the people of the city related of his remarkable power over the spirits that torment human beings with disease and all sorts of troubles, the people of Songir confirmed. Not long after his arrival the child of the *chowkadar* [1] fell ill. Prayers and sacrifices in the temple proved unavailing; the divinity would not give ear to the mother's pleading; so she sought out the Kurumba and begged him to save her child. During the night he came and drove the evil spirit out of the child, who still wears the *mantram* [2] which the Kurumba bound about him, and since then the *buth* [3] has never returned. The Kurumba drove the demon forth with rites and ceremonies of many kinds, and finally perforated, with a sharp silver stiletto, the lobe of the child's left ear, and bade the mother buy the little boy a new jacket from the *bunnia* who lived in a house close to the village temple, where he kept a clothing store. This *bunnia* was the only person with whom the Kurumba was on terms of friendship shortly after his advent. Gradually the women of the village grew accustomed to seeking help of the Kurumba when their

[1] Beadle.

[2] A magical charm contained in a small flask. It usually consists of a scrap of paper or cloth on which is written some magical formula.

[3] A demon; an evil spirit or gnome, much like the djinns of the *Arabian Nights*.

children fell ill, and the demons always quailed before his power. His fame extended to other villages, and you yourself—so the headman concluded his narrative—you yourself have seen that women come to our village from places a long distance away. And this explained the numbers of small flags fluttering on the trees and bushes around the village. Unless he were summoned by an urgent call—thus the headman continued—the Kurumba did not enter the village, but week after week I used to take him things. He was not always in his house when I got there, but I used to lay the gifts of corn and rice, and sometimes a scrap of clothing, on the bench before his hut. He often disappeared during the night, and for weeks we caught not a glimpse of him. Whither he went and what he did we do not know, and since it annoyed him to be asked questions we did not trouble ourselves as to his whereabouts. As to what the Kurumba did with the offerings of the devout, the headman could vouchsafe me no satisfactory answer. Apparently his frequent disappearances had some connection with the sale or barter of the gifts of grateful mothers. The elders of the village did not deny that he must, in the course of years, have become a wealthy man.

On the very day appointed for my departure there came to pass a prodigious event that brought a sore calamity upon Songir. I can still see, as though it were yesterday, the Kurumba running like a madman from his hut, crossing the river-bed without waiting to pick his way,

tearing across the stubble fields and into the village, his hair in a wild tangle, his eyes blazing with hatred, greed and despair, mumbling to himself, loudly uttering curses, making straight for the headman's house. In a moment the Hindu inhabitants of the Brahmin village had gathered round him, and I heard one telling another, as the old hermit seated himself on the ground, loudly wailing, or staring before him, or tearing his beard and hair with both hands, that during the night, he having been compelled to leave his hut, his property, his money had been stolen. The headman sent the *chowkadar* and the Kutwal to the edge of the ditch that divides the village of the "Touchables" from that of the "Untouchables," and ordered the men and boys to come to the place of assembly. There they were accused of the theft, but none of them confessed to it; not even when the headman, in his wrath, beat two boys, who were kneeling on the ground before him, over the head and shoulders with his staff. Then they all began to wail aloud, begging the Kurumba and the headman to have mercy on them, and protesting their innocence. But as the other Hindus also began to cudgel them, in order to make them confess to what perhaps none of them had done, I stepped between them and bade them stop, and as my pleading was in vain, I threatened to inform the Sirkar. This had the desired effect; I then proposed that the Kutwal should be sent to Bandwa in order to fetch the police. While I was still speaking, the Kurumba slowly rose

from the ground, and gazed at all those present with a gaze so terrible that even I shuddered when his eyes met mine. He went up to the headman's house, and climbed the steps to the verandah, just as a preacher ascends his pulpit. We all followed him as though under a spell. He lifted his brown and withered arms toward the heavens, and laid his terrible curse upon the village, that curse to which the people of Songir afterwards attributed all the misfortunes that came upon them.

"Cursed be this village! May the black death fall upon all, and as for him who is not choked by the pest may he become a snake or a wild beast of the jungle! Pleading for release, let him pass from one existence to another, and may his soul find no rest! Dust thou wert, to dust returnest!" And again, with both hands, he gathered up the dust underfoot, and threw it into the air, by this gesture giving his curse a terrible emphasis. At that moment I understood the terror which had made the Inspector shrink back from the Kurumba. Then the Kurumba descended the steps, and all those standing there made room for him, rigid and speechless. He passed through the crowd that filled the place of assembly, but instead of leaving the village by the exit that passed by his hut he turned off in the direction of Aulia. On leaving the village he plunged into the jungle. The men of the village stood tongue-tied where he left them, and not until long after he had disappeared did they recover the use of their

tongues. He was never seen again. I myself was travelling to Aulia that night, but none of the people whom I met on the road, or, on the following day, in the village, could give me any news of him. No one had seen him. Three weeks later I passed through Songir on my return journey. What lamentation there was in the village! The headman was no longer among the living. The Kutwal, too, was dead, and the *chowkadar*, with his wife and children, whom the Kurumba had healed before, were dead. The first to fall victims to the plague were the wretched people of the pariah village. There the plague had appeared in devastating strength and was still raging. In almost every other hut lay a sick man waiting for the end. What could I do, save give battle to the enemy, as far as my poor strength allowed? But the medicines from the Bandwa dispensary were of no avail. In the end, in order to protect those families which had not as yet been attacked, I was forced, as a last resource, to burn the infected dwellings. First the pariah village was burned down. Elsewhere, whenever I had seen the flimsy huts of the common people destroyed by fire, the air had been filled with woe and lamentation, but here despair had left the people so stupefied that they put together their few possessions in silence, and withdrew to the jungle, where they built themselves makeshift huts and shelters of twigs and branches.

Songir, when I first set eyes upon it, contained perhaps 400 souls. Between the time when the

plague broke out and the tenth day, which I spent there on my return journey, in order to help the poor creatures, 198 persons had fallen victims to the plague. There was a death from plague in practically every hut; yet the survivors set such value on their little scraps of land that they were not willing to leave the village. The poor pariah inhabitant of an Indian village possesses absolutely nothing, yet he hangs on tenaciously to the tiny bit of soil on which his hut stands, and when he is compelled to go out into the world, it may be to a place but a day's journey distant, he falls ill and speaks in homesick fashion of his "land." Day and night they placed offerings before the *mandi,* and when one stick of incense had burned away another was immediately kindled. Those who were still in sound health and those who could still drag themselves along, betook themselves to the temple. There the *pujari* removed the crudely daubed picture from the altar and took it down to the river and back again to the village, and throughout the night one heard them lamenting and calling aloud upon the gods amidst the throbbing of their tom-toms: "Miharban! Miharban!—Gampati!—Miharban!—Have mercy upon us!—O divine Gampati, have mercy upon us!"

During the first few days of the plague the corpses were still buried in comparatively deep graves, and the first victims among the people of caste were even burned. But the survivors grew ever more and more negligent. A thin layer of soil and a few heavy stones and thorn-

bushes, that covered the bodies, so that the jackals should not get at them, were now thought sufficient. However, during the night the jackals dug deep holes beside the graves, and then bored tunnels until they reached the corpses and dragged them out piecemeal. And in the morning one saw here a severed arm and there a leg, or a hideously mutilated head, lying amidst the stones. The burying-places were thick with vultures, squatting there in their hundreds, with naked necks, while the crows, restlessly flying hither and thither, waited until the vultures should be sated, when they in turn fell upon their hungry meal with hungry "caws." By nightfall their hoarse, strident voices were silenced by the ghostly howl of the jackals, which mingled with the lamentations of the villagers in a hideous melody that filled the heavens.

It was as though the beasts of the earth and the fowls of the air had assembled for a hideous funeral repast. The jackals, which one seldom sees by day, save perhaps a belated animal timidly slinking from bush to bush over the grey jungle soil on his way to his secret lair, now surrounded the village even by daylight, and only when the wailing villagers hastily issued forth, bearing a fresh victim to the stinking graveyard, there to throw it into the grave, did they slink back, taking cover behind the nearest stone-heap or clump of cactus, only to rush forth again in furious haste to fall-to upon the fresh carrion, their tails dragging in the dust behind them. Horribly sinister was the croaking of the vul-

tures and the crows, and the bellies of the pariah dogs, as they fought with the jackals over the last scraps of human carrion, were loathsomely bloated. The villagers, who implored the village god to help them, offering up their prayers and sacrifices, were fewer every day, and the jungle paths leading from the village to the outside world now lay silent and untrodden. The plague had spread from Songir to all the villages round about. Then the terrified survivors took leave of one another. Those who were still living fled into the wilderness, but the cruel goddess followed them, sought them out in their last place of refuge, and spared no one.

To-day Songir may be one of those communities described as " dead villages," of which one finds so many up and down the great Peninsula. The huts slowly decay, and the heavy rainfall turns the ruined walls into shapeless heaps of clay. Where once the singing of women was heard, and the laughing children drove the cattle to the pastures in the morning, while the young girls played and sang beside the crystal river, there is now nothing to be seen but the pitiful remains of human habitations in which the beasts of the jungle have made their lairs. The Hindu traveller who sees such places gives them a wide berth, so that the road that once ran through the busy village now passes it in a wide half-circle.

Thus the unholy prophecy of the Kurumba was fulfilled; it may not have been the power of his curse that brought disaster to Songir; the plague was already raging in the chief town of the dis-

trict, and anyone travelling that way might have acquired the infection in the bazaar and carried it home to his village. But he who travels through that countryside to-day will hear at night, under the pipul-tree, beside the village square, the strange history of the wizard of Songir.

BURIED ALIVE

IT WAS LATE IN THE NIGHT when we drew near to the village of Aulia. A long day's journey lay behind us; the bullocks moved wearily along the dusty jungle road, for they had had no water since the previous day, and even Govind sat exhausted in the cart as he drove slowly to the open space in the midst of the village. However, on this particular night I did not wish to be the guest of the headman in the Brahmin village, for in that part of the village where the pariahs dwell in their miserable huts a friend of mine lay sick; a weaver, whose acquaintance I had made some months before, in the bazaar of the neighbouring market town, and I had promised his wife that I would visit him if I happened to pass that way. The headman of the village disdainfully shook his head when I declined his hospitality for the night and had the cart led across the ditch into the pariah village.

But alas! I had come too late. Hiralal had died early that morning, and even before sunset they had carried his body to the steep hill that rises behind the village, shaped like a pyramid, covered with loose boulders and bare of trees and bushes. The still youthful widow sat

lamenting before the hut, and the men and women of the village, squatting before the mourning widow, spoke together of the dead weaver. No one addressed the widow, and she herself seemed oblivious of those about her. Her head was clean-shaven, and a short yellow cloak had taken the place of the red *sari* that only the married woman may wear. When I went up to her she looked up, slowly pushed the mantle back from her forehead, recognized me, greeted me, and finally told me, in a voice broken by convulsive sobs, the story of her husband's death. She then continued to mourn the dead, for the most part quietly crying to herself, but now and again breaking out into loud complaints and lamentations. It was impossible for me to disturb her, for this night by ancient custom it was her duty to mourn the departed.

The pariah villages of India are all poverty-stricken and wretched and incurably filthy. And this was especially true of Aulia. The air was poisoned by the stench of the stagnant water in the slimy tank near by, and there must have been some putrefying carcase close at hand, so terrible was the smell. Accordingly I left the cart in the hands of the villagers, taking from it the essentials for camping out for the night, and took my leave of the assembled inhabitants. It so happened that there was no rest-hut there, as is usual in an Indian village; but a wizened old man, worn out with poverty and labour, told me that on the summit of the hill, in the middle of the burying-ground, there was a large roomy

hut, since at some previous time, before the dead were buried there, certain Sunyassis had had a settlement there.

It was a pitch-dark night; not a star was to be seen in the heavens; for these were the days before the rainy season, when the black clouds gather in the skies, before pouring down upon the earth the long-anticipated rains. The Indian villagers are so timid that no one dares to leave the village at night; and when Govind heard where the hut stood, and that a man had been buried on the hill that very evening, he urgently implored me to remain in the village. However, I knew that I could never pass the whole night in that terrible atmosphere, so I allowed him to remain in the village, while I lit my lantern and went my solitary way to the hut on the hill-top. As always when a corpse is buried, the jackals had gathered round the village in hundreds, and were filling the air with their hoarse howls. It sounded like the shrieking and lamenting of tortured spirits. In the circle of light thrown by my lantern I could see the brutes slinking away, blinded and startled by its rays. In about ten minutes' time I came to the deserted hut. It was still in good repair, lacking only a door. I spread my blankets on the floor, placed the lantern in one corner, and with the aid of the wood-pile, built myself a good fire for the night. Nowhere was the poverty of the lower classes of India so strikingly apparent as in this place of death. When people are too poor even to burn the bodies of those dearest to them, or

at least to bury them so that they shall be safe from mutilation by wild beasts—then they are poor indeed. Hundreds of times have I passed by daylight through such burying-grounds, and have noted the skulls and bones lying about, and bleaching in the sun. Neither the jackals, nor the vultures, nor the crows can quite manage to empty the skull. This last task falls to the white ants. Consequently a sickening stench of carrion is wafted away from these burying-places. On the night of which I am writing the air was filled with it, and as a result of the moisture accumulating in the air, some of the more recently buried skulls were shining with a phosphorescent light. The air was full, too, of the alternate barking and lamentable howling of the pack of jackals that were seeking their food around me. In such a burying-ground the bodies are often buried scarcely a foot from the surface, and thorn-bushes and heavy stones protect them from the jackals only for a few successive nights. A marvellous instinct has taught the jackals to avoid the toilsome method of exhumation; at a distance of perhaps six feet from the grave they drive a tunnel until the body is reached, and through this the corpse is brought to the surface fragment by fragment, to furnish food for their hideous banquet. I lay beside the faintly flickering fire, now and then replenishing the flames with a fresh billet of wood, and gazing out into the darkness with a certain feeling of horror, listening to the ghostly calls and cries and the ravenous howling of the jackals as they gradually fell silent; for

the jackals never spend the whole night in one spot, but after a time disappear, to return again a little later. This happens with such regularity that the villagers are able to tell the hour of the night by their movements. Scarcely had their howls faded into the distance for the first time that night when a plaintive outcry arose in the immediate neighbourhood of my hut, a sound so terrible that I trust I shall never hear the like of it again. I rose to my feet and listened intently, full of terror and uneasiness. No human being could utter such a cry save in extremest need! And as I listened, rigid with terror, I distinguished the voices of two different creatures; one was undoubtedly the lamentable howl of a jackal, but now and again I heard a faint whimpering that seemed to come from one of the graves, as though from a man who no longer had the strength to call aloud for help.

I had to decide upon some course of action. I must honestly confess that a contemptible feeling of terror made me hesitate to follow up the sound and find the place from which the complaint arose. However, the thought that a human being might be in terrible need of help induced me finally to leave the circle of my camp-fire. I took my lantern and made my way through the darkness in the direction of the cries. The white bones at my feet glimmered mysteriously in the rays of my smoky lantern, and my feet stumbled amidst the skulls that rolled down the sides of the hill until they struck against a mass of rock

or became entangled in some thicket of stunted thorn-bushes.

At last I reached the place whence the mysterious groaning and wailing issued. This was the grave of the man who had just been buried that night. I could plainly distinguish the wailing of a human being and the dismal howl of a jackal. The thought flashed into my mind: "Hiralal has been buried alive. . . ." And in the same moment I rushed back to the hut, where I had noticed a small spade, such as the native gardeners employ, standing in one corner. Therewith I returned to the grave, and I doubt whether any man ever worked more eagerly than I, that night, in the weird society of the dead mangled bodies all around me, the wailing corpse, and the howling jackal. I had no idea where the head or the feet of the corpse might lie, but began to dig at random, at one end of the grave. And all of a sudden, after the removal of several blocks of stone, my spade struck upon some yielding substance, and a shriek rose into the night, so penetrating that the spade all but fell from my hand. The light of the lantern showed me the body of the jackal. Greedier or hungrier than the rest, he had scratched a tunnel through the earth, through which he forced his way, until he had reached the corpse. Having reached it, he bit into the scalp of the dead man, and at that very moment the weight of the earth caused the fall of an especially heavy stone that lay over the entrance of the tunnel, so that the beast was crushed between the floor of the tunnel and the

rock, and was unable to free himself. This was the reason of his howls of terror, but his bite had brought the dead Hiralal back to life.

It was quite useless to go down to the village in order to bring help; I should never have succeeded in getting anyone—no, not even my cocksure Govind—to return with me a single step of the way. Accordingly I continued to work single-handed until I had freed the living corpse from its burden of earth, thorn-bushes and stones. The jackal I killed with a single blow of my spade. In vain did I beg Hiralal to rise to his feet; he lay there with open, staring eyes and smiled—the smile of a lunatic—the horrors he had lived through had deprived him of his senses. I pulled him out of the grave, and as I led him to the hut I had almost to carry him, and several times he eluded my grasp and fell to the ground. All night he lay beside me by the fire, and I tried to cool his head, which was burning with fever, by means of a compress consisting of my handkerchief and a piece of my turban. He looked neither to the right nor to the left, nor did his eyes ever close in sleep; he merely stared before him, still full of terror, although he was continually laughing the horrible laugh of the lunatic.

At last the flush of dawn appeared and flooded the plains. In the east was a golden sea of light and the azure veils with which earth had swathed herself during the night were touched by the flaming red of the still invisible sun; kindling at first only at the edges, they were soon flooded

with fiery light. From the foot of the hill came sounds of reawakening life; the cocks were crowing and the doves were crooning in the bushes, and in the trees that surrounded the village the screeching of the parrots was heard. Already isolated villagers, the colour of whose garments could not as yet be distinguished in the dim morning twilight, were leaving the village for the surrounding fields, taking with them their day's supply of water. But when I descended the hill in order to secure help for the man who had been buried alive, the morning wind flowed whispering across the jungle, bearing with it the odours of life refreshed and reawakened—the scent of the damp earth and the fragrance of flowers and opening buds. In that part of the village where the pariahs dwelt the people were already awake; the men were squatting before the huts, cleaning their teeth with little slips of wood. The women, busied with their preparations for the next meal, were running in and out of their huts, and from some of these latter one heard that melancholy song of poverty and toil—the clatter of the loom. Only the children were as yet invisible, since the morning air was too cool for them. My draught oxen were lying on the ground, nibbling at the bars of their feeding-trough. Govind, however, was already busy about the brightly-flickering fire, preparing my breakfast. I told him at once what had happened during the night. He was stricken with terror; he had never yet heard of such a thing. I was glad to have him with me

when I went to Hiralal's hut. His widow sat there as before; but the weeping and lamentation of the previous day and night had completely exhausted the poor creature, so that she now sat huddled up in front of her hut, covered by her *sari,* and still sobbing in her sleep. On my approach she woke and at once resumed her weeping. I sat down beside her, took both her cold, clammy hands in mine, and began to advise her and console her as best I could. But it was as though I had been speaking to the empty air. For her there was no consolation. A dead man is dead. Was not her husband borne away from the village only the day before on his crudely fashioned bier? Was he not now lying in the burying-ground up on the hill? Was not the grave duly covered with earth, thorn-bushes and stones? Did not the barber, the only priest of the pariahs, perform the last rites over his body? How should a dead man come to life again?

Gradually the circle of listeners around me increased in numbers. Both men and women listened to what I had to tell them in incredulous amazement. It was then that I heard the cruel precepts of the ancient Hindu tradition: the dead man must stay where he is! He has been buried; he has taken up his residence with the dead and now he must forever make his home with the dead. In vain did I seek in every possible way to explain to them that Hiralal had not died; the fact still remained that he had entered upon his life among the dead; he was

polluted, and must never more enter the community of the living, and his wife must remain a widow until she too was released by death.

I went over to the Brahmins' houses and spoke to the pundit, an old man, who was also the *pujari*[1] of the village, and he, too, told me that according to the Shastra[2] Hiralal was no longer numbered among the living, and that his wife was still a widow, and for this reason he must dwell among the dead. I then witnessed one of the cruellest and most painful spectacles imaginable: the widow was escorted by the women of the village to the boundary line where the burying-ground began, and was there expelled from the community of the living. I accompanied her to the hut where her husband still lay with staring eyes, continually laughing his crazy laugh. She, who was at first unwilling to leave the village and her relations, now seemed for the first time to realize her horrible fate, and with a shriek of utter despair she flung herself upon her husband, with whom she would in future be compelled to live alone upon their hill-top. The emaciated figure of the living corpse, covered with a begrimed, greyish-black skin, was now clad only in a short yellow

[1] The priest who offers sacrifices.

[2] Laws of Manu. Manu is, of course, the great Lawgiver of the Hindu, who is believed to have lived about the fifth century A.D. His name, however, cannot be historically verified. Etymologically speaking, the name is more probably derived from the root *Man*, meaning order, rule or law, which would also seem to be the origin of the Latin Mandare (to order). We may compare with Manu the legendary name of the Egyptian king and lawgiver, Menes.

shroud, while about his neck Hiralal wore a wreath of withering, dust-covered acacias, the flower of the dead.

What was I to do with them both? I had no idea as to where I could take them. It was impossible to take them to any village, for their terrible story would inevitably spread throughout the country, and they would soon be turned out of their new home as unclean. The only alternative was to provide them both with money and a means of livelihood, and then leave them to their melancholy fate. For a fortnight I remained on the hill-top, sharing the little hut with them, until the shadow of madness had retreated from the apparently dead man. Then at last I felt that I could leave the place.

But Hiralal had no longer his old zest in life. For hours at a time he squatted in a corner, gazing stupidly into nothingness. He was often prostrated by the horrors of that terrible night as they recurred to his memory: that night when he lay as a dead man amidst the dead, and heard the carrion-fed jackals barking and howling around him, knowing that he was to be their victim and that he was powerless to defend himself. As a rule the soul of the Hindu pariah is inured to pain by bitter poverty and calamity, but in this case the thing experienced had so completely permeated his soul that it brought his sanity toppling to the ground.

Aulia was situated not far from the city in which I was working; consequently I was able from time to time to visit the two outcasts. On

my third visit I perceived with horror the first symptoms of leprosy on the man's fingers. Then the all-pervading malady, that kills slowly yet surely, seized upon the wife as well. And now for both the measure of suffering was filled to overflowing. It seemed to me a merciful dispensation of Providence that the disease soon struck inwards and attacked the lungs. This hastened the end. Two months after his first burial Hiralal died in truth. His second entrance into the other world was a painless one, since his mind was confused by delirium. Now his wife lived on the hill-top alone, full of the superstition of the Hindu peasant, afraid of spirits and afraid of death . . . so that it is not wonderful that she too became insane at the end of her first week alone. Day and night she wandered round the village, lamenting by turns and crazily laughing, until it was difficult to distinguish her voice from that of the jackals. I resolved to extricate her from her surroundings and place her in an asylum. But one evening, as I was paying a visit to the village, I was told, on seeking to send word to her of my arrival, that she had wandered off into the darkness during the previous night, loudly lamenting, and so far had not returned. She had disappeared, and no matter where I asked for news of her I could not obtain a word as to her whereabouts. The vast jungle had resumed her into its silence, just as it receives, year by year, so many thousands whom it never releases.

BANDAR-LOG

In consideration of the pious awe which in India protects the monkey-people from the persecution of mankind, and ensures them against punishment for even their greatest audacities, it is worth noting that the words "monkey" and "monkey people" serve as current expletives throughout the country. Just as the European city-dweller makes merry over the rustic and the provincial, on whom he is fond of bestowing some more or less witty nickname, so also does the Hindu. In order to describe his clumsiness and his awkward behaviour he calls the rustic a Jungli-wallah—that is, a jungle-dweller, a wild man, a savage, or a bandar—that is, a monkey; or if it refers to a number of men, the expression employed is *bandar-log*, or monkey-people, monkey-folk.

This last qualification is almost literally true of certain inhabitants of the interior of the Peninsula, who are descended from the most uncivilized strains of the aboriginal dwellers in the land. The wandering aborigines, who, wherever they go, make no continuing stay, and are often ignorant even of the use of fire, are always thus described. The furtive Bheels, who live amidst the Vindhya mountains, and the Sontali, who

can boast of about the same degree of civilization, are spoken of, by the inhabitants of the towns and villages, as monkeys and monkey-folk, and are regarded with disdain, as a sort of unclean animal. In the villages one often hears of a bandar-log, a monkey-folk, that dwells, like the monkeys, in the trees, speaks no intelligible language, lives on the fruits of the jungle and the fields, and on the approach of men who wear clothes, takes refuge in the unpeopled wilderness of the jungle.

Once only did I meet such people. It was in the rainy season, in the neighbourhood of the river Narbudda. I was stranded on a sort of island, on either side of which was a raging flood, and for some weeks I was entirely cut off from the world. Only with difficulty could I keep the wood dry in my tent with which I cooked my morning and evening meal. We had made our camp under a giant banyan, countless numbers of which trees grow along the banks of the river, attaining to such a size that they often give the traveller the impression that he must be in a forest, although the innumerable stems really belong to one single tree. The sacred banyan-tree, with its more than two thousand stems, is known to every traveller through the district, being indeed as famous as its brother in the Botanical Gardens in Calcutta. It was under this tree on the river bank that I first made acquaintance with the folk whom the villagers call the bandar-log. It was a starless night, and thick clouds were gathering

above the green leafy roof, and presently the rain came rustling down. Just as my fire began to send up its smoke—not without difficulty, for the air was reeking with moisture—I heard above me a lively confusion of voices, that sounded half human and half as though a herd of baboons was passing overhead. It was too dark to see anything plainly, and it was only by the light of dawn that I first noticed that above me a sort of matting was stretched from bough to bough, interlaced with the flexible suckers or aerial roots that hung from the boughs of the banyan. This rough carpet was covered with jungle grass, and on it human beings were sitting. They were small of stature; they might indeed almost have been called pigmies, and they were all stark-naked. Their hair was coarse and stood erect, like the untouched wool of a negro, and their faces were disfigured by their extremely prominent cheek-bones. Their eyes, deeply sunken in their orbits, had a furtive, short-sighted expression, without a glimmer of human intelligence. Among the fourteen persons visible were three mothers, whose infants were clinging to their breasts just like young monkeys. I could make nothing of what they were calling or rather screeching to one another; the one thing that was clear to me was that their speech consisted almost entirely of monosyllables. I could see that they were afraid of me and had not the courage to drive me away. When, with my servant, I had gone a few dozen yards from

the trees, all of them, men and women and children sprang down from the tree and fled into the dense undergrowth of the jungle. I saw no more of them; but this once, at least, I saw the true bandar-log.

It is not, however, of monkey-folk that I wish to speak to-day, but of an absurd story of my experience of the real monkeys, which always recurs to my mind when I think of the white-bearded communities that so often entertained me on my travels with their droll behaviour, and amused me with their almost human intelligence. The little town of Hetampur in the coal-mining district of Assensol is absolutely the type of an orthodox Hindu town, although the liberal Maharajah has founded an English school there. For a long time no European was ever seen in its streets. The palace, which to-day is inhabited by the sovereign, lies a little way outside the town, on the way to the nearest railway centre. It looks as though some playful spirit had stolen a gigantic palace from one of the great cities of the north and set it down in Hetampur, so strange, so isolated and so alien does the palace of Hetampur's Maharajah appear. Round about it lies the grey wilderness of the jungle, and far in the background is the little temple dedicated to the god Krishna, to which the Maharajah brings his sacrifice every morning. Here the nineteenth century seems to have come and gone without leaving a trace.

In the centre of the palace courtyard a water-clock may still be seen, and a watchman who

warns his fellows of the passage of time. Haughty women of rank stroll to and fro in the garden surrounding the palace, and in a wattled shed stand the three elephants which the Rajah displays on important feast-days when he heads the ceremonial procession through the streets of the little town.

All day long the sovereign sits on his cushions in the reception-hall, surrounded by his sons and grandsons, while a servant stands behind him with a fan, and before him kneels a little boy whose duty it is to attend to his hookah. Here he receives reports and decides all such judicial questions as affect his little kingdom. The palace was built to indulge a love of display rather than to fulfil an actual need; the true ancestral home stands in the heart of the city, and it was there that the Maharajah assigned me quarters during my stay as his guest.

A wonderful old house is the Rai-Bati, full of the secrets and traditions of the long-vanished generations; of the life and doings of the glorious days of old, when as yet men knew nothing of the West with all its inventions and its strange achievements; when the greed of gold and their iniquitous love of gain had not yet made its way to this corner of the world. The new palace admittedly makes a brave show with its lofty rooms and its modern apartments of state, but I myself preferred the old ancestral palace in Hetampur, and I loved to wander, in the early morning or the evening twilight, through its forsaken halls and chambers. This

palace stands in the heart of the town, and the little houses of the townsfolk lean snugly and confidingly against the broad bastion that surrounds it. The wide moat, which in the warlike times of the Moguls was still filled with water, as a means of defence against an attacking enemy, is now dry, but the drawbridge is still drawn up on the approach of night, when the old watchman in the little tower announces the coming of darkness, by beating on his ancient bronze gong. All thoroughfares leading into the city are now closed, save that at the principal gates the watch is still stationed, armed as in the good old days, with long curved swords and huge muzzle-loading muskets.

With the exception of these weapons there is nothing warlike about the two soldiers who guard the ancestral home from unauthorized intruders. Their beards are snow-white, and unless a prince of the ruling house or the old prince himself is expected they squat down behind the low walls of the bastion, their heavy weapons lying at their feet, and quietly puff at their water-pipes or chew their quids of betel. I knew these two old Sikhs well, and on the occasion of my visit to the old palace I never failed to linger a few minutes with them, in order to exchange items of gossip and to take a few puffs at the water-pipe. They were weather-beaten veterans, who had fought on the side of Nana-Sahib in the mutiny of 1857, and then, when more peaceful times had descended upon Bengal, they accompanied the Maharajah and

his sons as huntsmen on their hunting expeditions in the jungle. They had both won a reputation for fearlessness, and old Govind Singh would proudly show all who made his acquaintance the claws and teeth of the tigers which he had slain.

The reception-halls and dwelling-rooms of the castle stood empty, and as one goes from room to room over the marble tiles—and the rooms are many—one seems to hear the echo of many voices, the voices of those who lived there in bygone days. The rooms were lit only by the faint light which filtered through the dark red and blue panes of the windows that opened on to the courtyard, where in earlier times the princes gave audience and dispensed justice. Throughout the whole palace a dreamy, twilight mood prevailed, and a pleasant coolness.

At one end of the palace, just before one stepped out on to the great marble terrace, which affords one a view of the city without, and, in the background, the palm-trees along the banks of the river, is one large chamber, the only one that was then still inhabited. In the centre stood an enormous bed, in which ten men might comfortably have found room. Four steps led up to the bed. From the ceiling hung a stupendous mosquito net—so that the whole structure looked like a huge baldachino. In one corner of the room stood a little desk, of such a height that no one could work at it unless he himself were to squat upon the floor; and affixed to the wall above it was a bookshelf

filled with ancient books, while against another wall a brazier was placed to warm the room in the cold season. Here, too, were brightly coloured stained-glass windows, before which hung a light curtain of coco-nut fibre, to keep off the rays of the sun.

Such were the quarters of the Maharajah's aged pundit, a wonderful old greybeard, infinitely venerable in his bearing and appearance. No one in all Hetampur knew precisely how old he was. He was still vigorous, and full of youthful enthusiasm, with a childlike love of all that was beautiful. He would spend hours in the tiny garden below the terrace, tended by his own hands, rejoicing in every little flower as the most glorious gift of God. He had no servant; he was his own cook; not only because he loved to be alone and to dream amidst his memories, but also because he came of the highest caste of the Brahmins. Every morning, before the dawn had fully given way to the brilliant sunlight, he left the old palace and passed through the little, still sleeping town, to the new castle, in order to accompany the old Maharajah on his morning walk. They always took the same walk, first through the palace gardens, and then along the narrow, hilly, aloe-bordered path for perhaps a mile beyond the town, to the hill on which stands a ruin, a memorial of the attacks of the warlike Sivaji. The hill, from foot to summit, is absolutely bare of trees or lesser growths, but it affords him who climbs it a most magnificent

outlook. The surrounding countryside is full of little jungle villages, all but hidden beneath the trees, and through their midst passes a long line of palms, denoting the presence of the only river existing in these parts; and then one's gaze falls upon the town with its three white, shimmering temple roofs, and there, amidst the dense confusion of houses, is the proud citadel of the princes. Beyond the castle is a dense grove of orange-trees from whose sombre green rises a sharply pointed turret of the temple dedicate to Krishna, in which the old prince daily offers up his prayers. From Giridanga a road runs through the fields to this grove and to the sanctuary, which is one of quite peculiar beauty, harmonizing perfectly with the landscape. It is built of snow-white marble, and in its midst is a tank of limpid, shimmering water, to which marble steps lead down on every side. When the Maharajah, a man of more than seventy years, enters the temple with his companion, and approaches the altar, on which stands an image of the god Krishna, the sun rises from behind the hill, a huge fiery disc, sending its rays across the city, and the fields and gardens. Then, with a ringing of bells and a blowing of conch-shells, the Brahmins sing their first morning hymn, and a new day begins in Hetampur. From the temple the Maharajah makes his way to the new palace, the goal of his morning walk. I owed it to the old pundit that I was not compelled to stay in the palace with its countless inhabitants, but was enabled to take up my

quarters in a little house close to the old palace, which was a dependency of the chief temple of the city and had at some time been inhabited by the chaplain of the palace. It was a very old house. In order to reach it one had first to skirt a small tank which divided it from the houses of the townsfolk, and on whose steps one might behold, all day long, a pageant of many-coloured life. In the morning the first to arrive were the women and unmarried girls, who came to bathe, and were followed by the men, and as long as the heat of the day was not too extreme, the steps were always closely thronged. The children tumbled about or played, standing up to their necks in the water, and their joyous laughter and gossip resounded through the High Priest's little house on the farther side of the tank. A grove of mango-trees surrounded the tank, and there was always a flock of monkeys sitting on the boughs of the trees. When the burning heat of noon drove the human bathers away from the water, the monkeys came down out of the mango-trees and played about the tank; but late in the after-noon, directly the signs of human life returned, and the faithful passed by on their way to the temple, there to offer up their prayers or sacrifices, the Bandar-log accompanied them, seating themselves on the crockets and pinnacles of the temple, on the walls and the roof of the sanctuary. Between the back of the house and the temple there was a garden, surrounded by a wall perhaps ten feet in height, and every

evening at nightfall the white-bearded elders of the tribe would gather together, at this favoured spot, until only the thin wooden lattice of the back verandah of my house divided them from me. In the middle of the garden is one tall mango-tree, whose fruit has the most wonderful fragrance, but I myself never enjoyed many of its mangoes; as soon as they were ripe they were stolen by the monkeys.

Those were peaceful days, the days of my sojourn in Hetampur. Of an afternoon the teachers and students of the little college used to seat themselves close at hand, or I would watch them at their cheerful labours, and not seldom I myself would often take part in their youthful games and pastimes. I often went out into the jungle with them where we would put up and give chase to a hare, or gather from the thorn-bushes the blue-black berries which, when dried in the sun, are made into rosaries, or I played at marbles with the children of the major-domo and their friends in the shadow of a wall; though I could never get them to draw back the thumb, so that the little projectile was shot forth like a bullet from a pistol.

When the shadows had become longer and the sun was slowly sinking to rest in the western sky, and the warm evening breeze from the jungle found its way among the houses, I used to sit in the back verandah with the old schoolmaster, and there we used to discuss the philosophy of the ancient scriptures. But if I was alone I used to lay my little carpet outside

the wooden balustrade, on the gravel path that surrounded the house, and thence used to watch the brisk activities of the monkeys in the trees in my garden, which bordered that of the temple. Just as I had soon struck up a friendship with the inhabitants of the town, so I soon became intimate with the white-bearded dwellers in the trees.

It was not long before they would squat down before me like old friends, taking from my hand the savoury monkey-nuts, which I always carried in my pocket for their delectation and my own. There was one white-bearded mother who carried her baby, just as the native mothers do, on her hip, and without any false modesty she used, in my presence, to seize her young one and search its tender skin for insects. She was so trusting that she would often feel in my jacket-pocket with her furry hands and bring out the nuts herself, which she then shelled with the most comical solicitude. As a rule, of course, there was one gang of cheeky scamps for whom no one and nothing was sacred; not even the gods in the temples, to whom so many prayers were offered. In particular they kept an eye on my cook, a venerable old Brahmin. The kitchen was not in the house, but in a small building some thirty feet distant. Day by day an army of crows used to settle on the roof, awaiting an opportunity for theft. The cook was never able to leave the kitchen without first locking the door, for otherwise the vigilant flock would have ransacked the whole kitchen.

In the evening, however, when the crows had withdrawn to their nests in the trees that surrounded the house, their place was taken by the monkeys, and often enough, when the cook was carrying some of his dishes into the house, one of the flock would leap upon his back from the edge of the roof and seize a handful of food from a heaped-up dish. They knew the time better than I myself, and might always be seen at the hours appointed for my meals surrounding the kitchen, and many an oath fell from the lips of my otherwise even-tempered cook, when he had to turn back to the kitchen with empty dishes, in order to cook me a fresh meal. The most impudent and audacious of the white-bearded tribe—and there must have been about fifty of them—was the leader, an abnormally big fellow, who must long before have said good-bye to his youth. With inexorable severity he used to drill his regiment, although surrounded by the other monkeys, and woe to the inquisitive young monkey who did not immediately obey his orders! His ears were soundly boxed, and he was thrown down from the tree with such force that one half expected to hear his bones crack. Such was the result of his presumption and disobedience.

One day Natesam had prepared a particularly tempting dish, but in spite of all precautions the catastrophe occurred once more: and this time the thief was the general himself. With amazing swiftness he landed on the cook's back, tore from the startled old man the dish of sweet

curry which he was carrying, and dragged it under the tree. When he had satisfied his own appetite he allowed the rest to share in his enjoyment. I therefore decided to punish him, and the punishment was one that would make him appear ridiculous. Consequently I went into the house, and, taking a banana, I carefully split the peel, drenched the fruit with whisky, and then carefully returned it to its skin, so that no one would have guessed, from its outward appearance, what had really been done to it. I placed this banana under the tree, close to the trunk. It was an inflexible custom among the monkeys that the general must always be the first to examine any unknown object. Scarcely had I turned back to the verandah when he sprang to earth from the lowest bough of the tree. It was almost as though he had detected the odour of alcohol, for he approached the banana with some hesitation, now going on all fours and now on his hind legs only. When he was still a few yards distant from the fruit he suddenly prostrated himself with his belly on the ground and slowly crawled towards it. The others sat in the boughs above, and, departing from their usual custom, watched in perfect silence the proceedings of their leader. When at last he reached the fruit he turned it this way and that, playing with it almost as a kitten plays, sniffing at it and sneezing, and finally drew it a little way from the tree, evidently attracted by the odour of the whisky. He could no longer refrain from the forbidden fruit.

Finally he took it in his hands, but it was still some time before he stripped the yellow peel from the fruit itself. Then at last he decided to indulge himself, and ate it. Two young monkeys descended from the tree and crouched on the ground close by, but he rushed at them, raging and showing his teeth, whereat they fled, seeming to reach the top of the tree with a single jump. Leaning against the tree-trunk he consumed the banana, now and again sneezing as though it had been filled with pepper.

It was not long before the whisky began to affect him. Scarcely ten minutes had gone by when the bottle-imp took possession of him; he leapt back into the tree, and there provided a spectacle which I shall never in my life forget.

The rest of the monkeys—the males and the females, with their babies in their laps—were peacefully seated on the boughs, when all of a sudden the old rogue fell upon them like a devil unchained, lunging and hitting out on every side, and those who approached him too closely were promptly hurled from the tree. Shrieking and chattering, full of alarm, the whole company fled into the highest branches of the tree and thence made their way to the end of the yielding branches, which were bowed down to the earth by their unaccustomed load. There they remained, swaying up and down, safe, at all events, from the devil of drunkenness, shrieking and crying murder, and expressing their amazement and indignation. At last the tumult subsided. The general had seated him-

self against the lowest bough and was leaning back against the trunk. Now and again he showed his teeth and gazed upon his followers with a fierce and threatening expression; and then, relapsing into a series of unintelligible grunts, he finally closed his eyes and fell asleep. Suddenly, however, he lost his equilibrium and fell to the ground like a bag of flour. In amazement he gazed around him and rubbed his limbs; his energies were no longer equal to a sudden leap into the tree. Unsteadily he crept into a corner of the walled garden, his white beard pressed against his breast, and there, folding his arms over his hairy paunch, he again fell asleep. Above him, in the tree, silence still prevailed, except that now and again some infant monkey twittered a few words to his mother, only to be quieted by a gentle slap, after which all was once more silent.

Half an hour had perhaps elapsed when our hero roused himself from his intoxicated dream. Since I wished to make his punishment appear especially well-deserved, I had prepared a second banana, in the same fashion as the first, and with it approached the tree. But the apparently all but lifeless leader of the Bandar-log sprang upon me from his corner, terrible in his wrath, his whole being filled with hatred and indignation such as I had never before seen in a wild animal. I had only just time to reach the shelter of my verandah, with its wooden trellis, and to slam the door behind me. The general had followed me and was shaking the wooden

uprights as a raging tiger might shake the bars of his cage. His furious attack on the verandah had already loosened some of the uprights, so, in order not to irritate the creature further, I went indoors, and thence observed the conclusion of the comedy. When the monkey realized that I was not returning to the verandah, he ceased his attack upon the trellis and trotted off to the tree. He still had sufficient energy to swing himself up to the lowest bough, but hardly had he done so when the whole tribe fell upon him, punching and biting and scratching, and finally throwing him down from the tree. He slowly made off, only glancing behind him now and again in order to keep his pursuers at a distance. They, however, did not cease their pursuit of him until he vanished from sight over the wall that formed the boundary of the temple precincts.

Such was their fashion of punishing him. He had disgraced them and shown himself unworthy of his post as leader, with the result that they cast him out of their community. Afterwards I observed a number of such incidents; and the Anglo-Indians believe that these monkeys recognize the existence of a superior caste, just as their human fellow-countrymen do, and that they expel from this caste those that offend against its laws.

Some weeks later I made a solitary excursion into the jungle. My path led me past a freshly reaped field of corn. At the edge of the field, on a rock bleached by the sun and weathered

by time, squatted one lonely monkey. He, too, was an outcast: I read as much in every inch of his depressed and miserable person. And I felt profoundly remorseful for the stupid trick which I, in a freakish moment, had played the leader of the Bandar-log in my garden at Hetampur.

II

Travelling from Bombay to Calcutta, when once the train has climbed the steep wall of the Western Ghats, one crosses, at a number of points, the river Tapti, which in the rainy season increases in width until each bank becomes invisible from the opposite side of the river, while in summer nothing is left of it but the narrow, limpid brook at which the villager waters his cattle during the heat of the day, while the women, standing up to their knees in water, wash their scanty store of linen in the stream. And where the river passes through the grey, dusty desert, or through wastes of yellow jungle soil, unbroken, as far as the eye can see, save by the occasional dingy bushes of Jerusalem thorn, or a dark-green grove of mango-trees, there is always life beside the river. A herd of buffalo comes down to the river-bank, with crows perched upon their backs, or a flock of goats, or even vultures, with their repulsive, naked necks, or a single doe, seeking with graceful leaps, as the train rushes past her, the refuge of the wilderness. On either side

of the river lie solitary villages, surrounded by crops of grain or cotton, from whose roofs a blue smoke rises into the air. Then once more the low banks of the river are bordered by enchanting landscapes; palm-trees bow themselves far over the water, strangely adorned by the nests of the weaver-birds; and from the dense beds of rushes rise flocks of wild duck and white stork-like rice-birds.

I have undertaken many a journey along the banks of the Tapti. Once we had pushed ahead too far; our provisions were all exhausted; the tin boxes of rice and potatoes and other foodstuffs required on a journey of several weeks' duration were empty. In the district through which we were then passing there were no permanent villages: only here and there a little group of grass huts, probably run up some night by wandering Bheels,[1] and left standing, two or three days later, in the solitude of the boundless jungle. Nothing could be obtained from the Bheels. They had no goats, much less poultry, or the corn required for the daily *chupatti.* What they really did live on I could never quite understand, but one may guess from the dull and lifeless expression of their faces that they must be accustomed to the poorest possible diet.

And here I will describe a meeting with some Bheels of this character, since the mention of this

[1] Dwellers in the jungle, who make a living by cutting the tall, sharp-pointed jungle-grass and selling it in the nearest market.

district brings them to mind. One evening my servant (Kumarswami) and I discovered that we were approaching one of their settlements. Some twenty of them, of whom five were women, wearing their peculiar grass aprons,[1] had made a small circular encampment. On closer approach I noted that they had dug a pit about a foot in depth, covered with still green canes of bamboo, so that it looked like a hearth at which a joint was being roasted. Close by a stake had been driven into the ground, to which a mangy-looking yellow pariah dog was tied by a cord of coco-nut fibre. Before it stood a black, unglazed chatty, and to my amazement the vessel was filled with sweetened rice, which the dog was eating with enjoyment. I was astonished, because I knew that the Indian peasant could only now and again permit himself the luxury of rice. At last, however, the dog seems to have sated his appetite, whereupon he was seized by several men, one of whom held his mouth open, while another stuffed the rice, in the form of pellets, down his gullet, until the chatty was empty. The animal's belly swelled until he howled for mercy, but those about him had no compassion on him. I went up to them in order to stop their proceedings, threatening to report them to the Sirkar,[2] who would certainly

[1] Legend relates that Siva's consort one day encountered a number of Bheel women, who were completely naked. Moved by a feeling of shame for her own sex, she wove aprons for the women with the grasses of the jungle in order to cover their nakedness. Since then the Bheel women, according to popular tradition, have always worn this garment.

[2] Police or Government.

punish them. Like most of the nomadic Bheels, they were armed with bows and arrows, with which they killed the wild beasts of the jungle—such as hares and pigeons—in order to sell their quarry in the villages and small country towns. As one rather brutal-looking young man began surreptitiously to finger his bow I concluded my lecture and withdrew behind an isolated and crookedly developed coco-nut palm. Thence I was able to observe how they still continued to torment the poor brute. Some of the men had lit a fire and were now laying the glowing charcoal in the pit, filling it to the level of the bamboo staves. When the pot was empty they bound the dog's legs together, and laid him living on the fire. The poor beast's shrieks of agony were terrible to hear and the odour of burning hair was nauseating. For perhaps half an hour they continued to roast the victim that had been placed thus living on the embers. They then cut the roast into slices, including all its entrails, like a monstrous sausage, with the curved knives which at other times serve them to open coco-nuts, and straightway devoured the savoury meal. So much for the Bheels!

Weeks went by while I roved hither and thither through the jungle without further sight of the great military road, and our provisions, as I have related, were exhausted. My servant, who, for the sake of simplicity, was known as Sammy, had not long been in my service. He was a Christian, although it was years since he had seen the inside of a church; but if he had some

difficult problem to solve he took refuge in the ancient rites of the Hindu faith. His lawful wife was of the weaver caste. I had been forced to dispense with the services of his predecessor because he had too great an affection for my bed, my cigars and my whisky, although he was for ever protesting that he was a total abstainer. Sammy had come to me with a whole bundle of written recommendations, which I never ventured to touch, so filthy were they. Among the documents there was only one that interested me. The recommendation supplied by his last employer, a major in the British Army, read much as follows: "Kumarswami was in my service for four months as an ostler; he stole and drank no more and no less than the rest of his kind; the best I can say to recommend him is that his next employer should follow the wise rule of giving him a sound thrashing once a fortnight." Poor Sammy knew nothing whatever of the English language, and one may imagine his indignation when I translated this recommendation word for word. Nevertheless, he told me that he would keep it, in memory of an otherwise kind employer.

I never regretted employing Sammy. It is true that he lied and stole, as all Christian servants do, but he did so in such a cheerful, cordial fashion that one could not be angry with him; moreover—and this was enough to make me forgive anything—he never got into my bed with dirty boots on, smoking my cigars, while I was engaged at the college. Sammy, at one

time or another, had bought an old musket in the bazaar, though how he did so, in view of the strict legislation as regards the purchase and sale of firearms, I do not know. When we were travelling he always brought it with him, although I was never able to see that he gained anything by doing so. One had to aim at least twenty yards to the right or the left of one's target before one could cherish even the faintest hope that the bullet would reach its billet. Nevertheless, Sammy was proud of his "gun."

We were faced by the most immediate want; nevertheless, it went against the grain with me to kill an animal to satisfy my own needs. But our means of life had become so scarce that I was forced, unwillingly, to give Sammy, who was bursting with a desire to use his gun, permission to go shooting. For three days we wandered through that glorious country without succeeding in killing a single head of game. The only food we had left was a very little *dhal*.[1] On the third evening—when I had just been bathing in a quiet creek of the river, in the shade of a giant banyan-tree—I returned to the site of our encampment. It was a primitive encampment, as you may imagine, for even the little tent which I almost always took with me had been left at home. At a short distance from the camp stood the cart, while the oxen were tethered by a long cord, tied to one of the aerial roots of the banyan, and were peacefully chewing the cud or nibbling at the bundles of

[1] Linseed.

fodder which Sammy had strewed before them as their evening feed, quite untroubled by the emptiness of our larder. Even from a distance it struck me that my servant's face was beaming with joy, and as I approached the camp he called out to me that he had shot a hare. It is true that I had heard a shot about an hour earlier, but Sammy fired so often without success that I had not built any hopes upon the incident. However, when he showed me the cut-up flesh in an earthen pot, I had to believe my eyes, and full of joyful anticipation I sat myself down before the camp-fire.

The sun had already set, and the blue veils of night were falling upon the earth. Dreaming, I gazed into the flickering, sparkling flames before me, while the fragrance of the stewing meat filled me with joyful anticipation. Suddenly I noticed that a monkey kept lurking about the spot where my servant was sitting and preparing our evening meal. Sammy too had seen the beast and kept on glancing at me in rather a furtive fashion, as I thought. When he crept too close to the fire, my servant seized a live ember or a stone, and threw it at him, cursing him and all his forbears. Then the monkey would run back some ten or fifteen yards, but after a while would again approach the fire. Thereupon Sammy began to converse with me in the most animated fashion, which was not his usual habit when at work; it was as though he wanted to divert my attention from the monkey's behaviour, and his own.

At last the meal was ready. Carrying the pot between two bits of firewood, he brought it to me where I sat. After I had helped myself to my share of the stew he withdrew some little way with the rest of it, and sat down to his own supper. But he still had to keep on throwing stones to drive away the obtrusive monkey, whose behaviour was so curious that I asked Sammy what it could possibly mean. His reply was evasive, but I did not press the matter, for I was hungry, and the flavour of the stew was most delicious. When I had finished we sat together by the fire, and, as we always did on our travels, chatted of this and that, half under our breath; of our homes, and of those whom we had left behind in the city; and still, as though he were looking for someone, the monkey circled about the brightly-flickering fire.

That night I had no rest, being possessed by a feeling of uneasiness and anxiety. I lay with open eyes, gazing up at the star-filled dome of the heavens. Sammy, too, was unable to sleep; now and again he rose, took a burning brand from the fire, and threw it at the prowling monkey; and so the night wore on, until dawn, with its cool breezes, was close at hand. The bullocks were yoked to the cart and we left the place after resolving to follow the course of the river northwards, until we came to the village.

I loved wandering alone through the jungle, and accordingly bade Sammy go ahead with the bullock-cart. My intention was to bathe once

more in the silent backwaters, surrounded by sweet-smelling bushes, and to overtake him later in the day. A depression in the ground had already hidden the cart from my sight when I left the water. It occured to me that where Sammy had been cooking overnight there was a slight prominence, covered with stones, boughs and freshly turned earth. It looked like one of those graves which the poorer villagers raise above their dead ; and it was a remarkable fact that the monkey was at work on the mound, thrusting his paws amidst the stones and brambles, as though seeking to unearth a treasure. He was thrusting the heavy stones aside with a strength that I should never have expected in a monkey, lifting them off the mound and piling them up a little to one side of it. My approach did not disturb him ; indefatigably he continued to scrape away at the mound, but constantly kept on glancing up at me. At this I went forward, laying my knapsack, water-bottle and staff on the ground, and thereafter the two of us worked together, in order to bring to light his treasure and reveal his secret. Over and over again the inch-long thorns ran into the monkey's flesh, until the red blood dripped down upon the sun-bleached stones. His tender paws were clotted with blood, and as I watched him working at the farther side of the mound there rose before my eyes a picture of the outcast woman with leprous hands piling stones and briars above the grave of the child who had been ravished from her by the plague.

I tried to drive the creature away from the mound, so that he should no longer injure himself by such strenuous toil, but when I raised my hand in order to push him aside he showed his teeth as though he were about to bite me, and in his eyes I saw an expression of the profoundest affliction. Consequently I made haste to clear away the rubbish more rapidly, in order the sooner to make an end of this martyrdom.

Suddenly the monkey gave a shriek which seemed to express both joy and lamentation. A monkey's paw lay protruding from beneath a stone; and now I had the solution of the mystery; now I knew what a horrible meal I had made the previous night. A minute later the whole bloody hide of the slaughtered beast lay there uncovered. And I then witnessed a scene which will remain engraven upon my heart until my dying day. With a cry of lamentation, so human, so terrible, so charged with suffering that my inmost soul was paralysed with horror, the monkey seized the bloody pelt, to which the head, with its dead staring eyes, was still attached, and pressed it against his breast as though he would never again relinquish his hold. Then he turned away from me and went into the jungle; ever and again standing still and crying aloud in the very language of affliction, he threw himself on the ground beside the outspread skin, covering the head of his dead mate with kisses and pressing it to his breast.

As for me, I felt as though I had committed a

murder. Once more the monkey turned round, standing upright and pressing the skin to his breast, and thus gave me one last sorrowful glance; after which he moved away with a slow dragging gait, until he reached a grove of fig-trees, and disappeared beneath their sombre green foliage.

I followed the track of our cart, rejoining Sammy some two hours later. This was the first and the last time I struck Sammy. But what was the use of my blows? All about us was a glorious morning, full of life and beauty, but I had no eyes for it all; I could only see the monkey, with his bloody hands, striving to drag forth from under the briars and stones the relics of his life's companion; and I felt a constriction in my throat, and the tears rose to my eyes.

III

When I first heard that the plague had found its way to the city of N——, only five persons had already fallen a victim to the epidemic. But within a week it had swept away ten thousand of the dwellers in the native quarter, and on the day when I went through the narrow streets of this part of the city, in order to help, or at least to gather round me, those deserted children whose parents were dead, so that they might be taken to the "White House," I found a mutinous and stupefied population, rapidly perishing and stricken with despair. Most of the houses were

empty; the doors were open; from the street one could see the interior of poverty-stricken hovels and also of the homes of wealthier folk. The terror caused by the plague and the fear of imminent death had driven the people from the city. Those who had money sought to escape by the railways, but the authorities had taken the strictest measures. At the small stations on the branch line the passengers had to leave the train and undergo an inspection at the hands of the railway surgeon. Many remained behind, and despite their pleading and lamentation were placed in quarantine. Those who did not bear within themselves the germ of the deadly sickness died of fear and anxiety. Night after night the inhabitants went in procession to the holy places of the city, bearing torches and sticks of incense, and flowers, laid upon salvers of common earthenware or silver. The prayers of the poor creatures, pleading for help and salvation, rose to the starry heavens, but the Goddess of Death, her cruel lust unsated, continued to wreak her wrath upon the living. Vain were all the pleas of suffering humanity; vain were its sacrifices; useless were the prayers of the priests, offered up before the statues of the goddess in the brightly lit temples. In less than three weeks the plague had seized upon sixty thousand victims, dragging them, with but a few hours' respite, from the world of radiant life into the world of shadows.

Day and night I laboured, in company with many others, in the native quarters of the city;

but our efforts were no longer directed toward staying the epidemic; we sought only to rescue those who were sound and whole, and especially the children, from its cruel grasp.

Perhaps half a mile beyond the native quarter lay the Lal Bagh, partly park and partly zoological gardens; and even there the plague had gained a footing. Within a few days nearly all the animals fell victims to it: the many-coloured parrots, the magnificent peacocks, the tigers and leopards, the stags and does. And at last the sickness found its way to the monkey-houses. Almost every morning, soon after six o'clock, I used to go to the Lal Bagh, which the Rajah had adorned with the finest trees and the most fragrant flowers. In the early morning, when the diamond-like dewdrops still lay on the leaves, it was delightful to stroll in the shadow of the magnificent trees and amidst the fragrant beds of flowers. A few months before the outbreak of the plague the Rajah had received a pair of chimpanzees as a present from a friend. The building in which they were kept was still glistening with its fresh coat of whitewash. They were two unusually intelligent animals, and it was not long before a sort of friendship had sprung up between us. What touched me more than anything was the gentle solicitude of the husband for the wife. He scarcely ever allowed his consort to accept, through the bars of the cage, such gifts as I took with me; he himself carried them to her, to the corner of the cage, where she always sat on a woollen blanket. If

the morning was particularly cool she would unfold the blanket and sit wrapped up in it as though in a shawl; and when she did this her husband helped her with all the airs of an attentive lover.

One morning, when I entered the gardens, the door was locked, and the door-keeper, when I called him, told me that this was done by the Rajah's orders, since the plague had found its way into the buildings in which the other animals were kept. However, since he knew that I was a friend of his master's he consented without much ado to admit me to the gardens. My first visit was to my friends the chimpanzees, and I was grieved to see that the little wife lay sick in her corner, wrapped in her blanket. If ever I saw an example of conjugal love and devotion, it was in this chimpanzees' cage. In vain were my appeals and enticing offers; the husband barely glanced at the banana I had brought him. Hitherto the keeper, as a trusted friend, used to go in and out of the cage, and the chimpanzees would stroll to and fro, holding him by the hand; but now the husband opposed every attempt of the keeper's to approach his sick wife, and he himself refused all food, except that he carried to the sufferer the milk that was placed in the cage.

Just as a mother helps her sick child to sit up in bed, so the ape, passing his arm round his wife's neck, helped her to raise her head. Now and again, moreover, he took her, blanket and all, on his lap, resting the burning head against

his cheek, gently whimpering and moaning. In the middle of the cage was a kind of swing, suspended from the roof, which provided recreation and exercise for both the inmates. When his wife no longer responded to his caresses he tried one last expedient: lifting her in his arms, he climbed cautiously on to the seat of the swing and gently swung to and fro with the sufferer, just as a mother rocks her child to sleep.

I spent the whole day there, watching for the final outcome of the tragedy. As night approached the female ape began to utter cries of pain, sometimes shrieking aloud, and then softly whimpering, and striking out as though in delirium. Every cry of pain was echoed in the heart of her mate; but he did not know what to do in order to alleviate her sufferings. Once I believe I saw tears in his eyes. The sick chimpanzee gradually became quieter. The shadow of death lay over her, and at last—for the keeper had placed an acetylene lamp in front of the cage—I saw the final stretching of the limbs; and the struggle was over—the sufferer was past suffering. Now the keeper tried to enter the cage, in order to remove the body. In vain, however, were all his attempts, whether gentle or forcible; so the dead and the living had to remain together for the night.

As I went homeward the unclouded sky was full of stars. From the native quarter I heard once more the plaintive cries of those who were praying before the altars and in the temples,

and the stench of burning corpses and the odour of incense came to me on the wind. Never yet had I felt myself so surrounded by forebodings of death as on that night, as I went homewards from the zoological gardens, along the white, dusty road that palely glimmered in the starlight.

Next morning the male chimpanzee had fallen sick in turn, and on the following day the keeper carried two corpses out of the cage, and buried them in a corner of the garden under a flowering sycamore.

MEMORIES OF MALABAR

I. TELLICHERRY

THE PEARL OF INDIA—MALABAR, nestling in its marvellous garland of palm-trees—lies on the west coast. Inland rises a range of mountains, a thousand miles in length, like a gigantic flight of stairs: the wild and rugged Ghats, climbing steeply to the tableland of India. It is a country which, in the character of its landscape, as in the temper of its people, is utterly different from the rest of India.

Perhaps the loveliest spot on the Malabar coast is the little town of Tellicherry: glorious in the freshness of the morning, when the sea is glittering in the first rays of the sun, and the faint smoke of its houses, hidden by groves of palm-trees, curls upwards across the dark mysterious blue of the mountains into the pale blue heavens; glorious at night, when the firmament is spanned by the dome of glittering stars, and the wide, phosphorescent ocean glimmers as though full of opals and diamonds; most glorious of all when the full moon's blood-red disc rises behind the palms like the fire of a blazing sacrifice that earth is offering up to heaven, while the shadowy

clefts in the black, jagged mountain range stood silhouetted against the sky, and the sea lay silent in the infinity of its eternal, glittering tides.

Tellicherry is a city of some sixty thousand inhabitants, with three newspapers, a court of law, a number of schools and—as compared with the other cities of Malabar—a large number of churches. From my house I used to go daily, after the beadle had locked the doors of the college, down to the sea, passing the palm-shadowed hostel, the club, the resort of the few Europeans, and finally crossing from corner to corner of the great recreation ground, the Maidan, on which all the schoolboys of the city collected every evening, there to play football or hockey. To the south the Maidan was bounded by the old Mohammedan burying-ground, in its idyllic situation, the blue distempered walls and white tombs standing out in almost dazzling brilliance from the background of green trees and deep-red houses. To the north it was flanked by the old, and now ruinous, memorial of the days of the East India Company; by the vast remains of the weather-beaten steps, hewn out of the rock, leading up from the sea. At the top of these steps is a sort of open platform, on which a huge quadrangle, overlooking the sea, is covered with stone benches.

When evening casts its shadowy veils about the city the schoolboys and students leave the Maidan, and seated on the steps, now black with age, in picturesque and gaily coloured groups chatter among themselves, or in silence listen to

the mysterious whispers or the dull roar and thundering crash of the waves. Now and again some frothing breaker leaps higher than the rest and sprinkles them with its snow-white foam, and they retreat, laughing and jesting, to the safer level of the esplanade. Standing there, the gaze is ever and again captured by the wide ocean, where the seagulls soar upwards into the light of the evening sun, or shoals of fugitive fish seek shelter in the coastwise creeks from that ocean murderer, the shark.

Little outriggers and rowing-boats, heavy laden with their living freight, return to the fishing-village that lies to the left of the ruined steps. Here lies a long stretch of sandy beach, which at certain times of the year is covered a foot deep in sardines, which the industrious Japanese take away in steamers, in order, when they reach Japan, to turn them into manure. However, the ingenious mind of a Malabar capitalist has conceived the idea of preserving the fish in tins and exporting them to Europe as food.

My pupils and I used often to sit there confidentially discussing this or that. Many a time, when a friend had come to my rooms at night because of some mental trouble or anxiety, I would turn down the lamp on my work-table, and we passed through the empty streets, across the Maidan, where already the jackals were filling the night with their hoarse, sinister howling, and climbed the steps to my favourite bench, which came, in the course of time, to be known among my more intimate friends as "the confessional."

Sitting there one enjoyed a delightful view of the city and its suburbs, with its houses and huts surrounded by gardens; here a charm seemed to rest upon even the poorest part of the city, where the magazines and factories of the European merchants, in which the wealth of Malabar lay hidden—its sweet-smelling sandalwood, its coffee, tea and cocoa, and the precious spices of the West Coast—are taking the place of the poor men's gardens. While the working-class quarters of our northern cities present a dismal appearance, by reason of the monotony of their grey-brown brick houses, in Tellicherry the huts of the very poorest are covered with green climbing plants or overshadowed by palms.

The houses of the wealthier inhabitants stand in the midst of a courtyard, and are built on piles, and in order to enter them from the street one must ascend a flight of two or three steps. This serves to keep the domestic animals of one's neighbour, and especially his goats, at a fitting distance; but above all it keeps the house drier than would otherwise be the case during the three months' rainy season. The house is entirely surrounded by a verandah on which the inmates sleep. Palm-trees of every size surround the buildings, and there is often yet another small flower-garden in the front of the house. The people hereabouts are certainly the handsomest that I have as yet met with in India, although the majority of the inhabitants were originally of the lowest caste, that to which the owners of the palm-leaf hut belong. Yet nowhere did I find such scru-

pulous cleanliness. The waist-cloth is always of a dazzling whiteness, and as the Tyar wears it it looks as though he were wearing a white coat. The upper part of the body is covered by a tunic-like shirt, or—and this does not look nearly as well—by a conscientious but painful imitation of a European jacket. The hair is done up in a knot, which is often adorned with a large comb, such as the Singalese also employ, so that when the Tyar appears without a turban or other head-covering he is often taken for a woman. His eyes are large and luminous in his finely chiselled, olive-hued countenance, which even in the poorest classes reveals a certain delicacy, an almost effeminate gentleness. The gait is elastic, unhasting, always quiet and dignified. Quiet and dignified also are the gentle and harmonious tones of the dialect which is spoken on the Malabar coast.

II. MONSOON

This word, monsoon, acts like an incantation on the teeming millions of India. For weeks beforehand the newspapers are full of telegraphic messages, foretelling the day, and if the time is very near, the hour of its advent. Year after year the crowd is possessed by the same tense anticipation, the same longing for the first black clouds that herald the rainy season. Nowhere was the spectacle so stupendous as in Malabar. There the day and the hour were foretold with the greatest exactness; yet even a week beforehand one might

see, all along the coast, dense crowds of people, who evening after evening left the towns to gaze expectantly in the direction from which it was anticipated that the first ragged fragments of flying wrack would come.

Even the games played on the Maidan were forgotten. Schoolboys, old men and little children with their mothers, were all assembled in the open space beside the old ruins. The stone steps were densely thronged. At last the day drew on to its close. The sun had sunk into the sea, glowing a fiery red, and again the shore was wreathed with phosphorescent fires. And then it was as though the black ranks of the clouds were emerging from the ocean, on the very horizon, whence they climbed ever higher and higher into the heavens, ever darker and blacker, until the cry—"The monsoon! . . . The monsoon!—passed from mouth to mouth.

The black wall that stretched from side to side of the horizon swelled to ever mightier proportions as it approached. The upper edge was still faintly illumined by the fires of the now vanished sun, and then nothing more could be seen beyond this vast, black wall, which, as it increased in size, drew always nearer and nearer. Every possessor of a watch pulled it out in order to calculate how long it would be before the clouds would reach the coast. The heavens grew more and more gloomy and sinister; darkness lay over the land, and the air seemed to weigh upon one with a tangible pressure; the smoke from the chimneys above the town, which had formerly

risen straight up into the skies, now remained lurking amidst the huts, and with every minute of their approach to the coast it weighed more heavily upon the earth, so that against the background of the city it looked as though the earth were covered by a wide ocean of cloud. Within half an hour a black rampart had risen over the sea, while on the landward side, sharply delimited along its eastern frontier, the heavens, which were still of a limpid blue, were shimmering with an infinity of twinkling stars.—And now the monsoon has reached the line of the coast. The watchers hasten away to their huts and houses. Next minute the rain pours rustling down from the heavens. While they are all still laughing and beaming with delight as they run across the Maidan, the first shower falls, straight as a flight of arrows, like a shower-bath, quenching the thirst of the parching earth.

From the moment when the monsoon sends its first shower of rain upon the earth the face of the whole country is changed. Where, on the previous day, nothing was visible but the dry, bare, yellow soil, a fresh green overspreads it by the second day, and within a week flowers are everywhere bursting from their buds. So swiftly does the grass grow that one could almost believe its growth to be visible. The roads and lanes, even those which are kept in good order by the Government, and which, but one day earlier, had displayed crevices a yard in length, were alike washed away with the incessant downpour. The moisture steamed upwards from the earth as

though one were pouring water on a red-hot stone. The misty vapours did not rise into the heavens, but crept along the ground, beneath the heavy rain-clouds. The streets were empty, and the inhabitants were squatting in their verandahs and chatting about the probable duration of the rainy season, or the sowing of the fields and the chances of a lucky harvest. It was a strange sight when the people hastily slipped across the street; with their long waist-cloths, which at other times had the appearance of a skirt, girded up to their loins, while they anxiously sheltered themselves beneath their palm-leaf umbrellas. The rivers and creeks, the fields and pastures and gardens are all flooded, and one might well take the whole city to be a settlement of lake-dwellers.

The monsoon is a time of harvest for the caste of the Chapper-Bhands; when the heavy torrents of rain are splashing down day and night, on the broad leaves of the palm-trees surrounding the house, it is impossible to hear the movements of a stranger approaching. At such times they are able to practise their craft with practically no risk of detection. A Chatter-Bhand whom I had once befriended told me in what fashion his caste goes about its work. Perhaps ten men will proceed to a given place of meeting. It is previously decided by lot who shall be the first to enter the house in which the theft is to be committed. They then bore a hole in the wall of the house (a very simple matter, since almost all bungalows

are built of soft, sun-dried bricks) large enough for a man to slip through. A Chapper-Bhand intending to rob a house will never on any account enter by the door. The outcast burglar is pushed through the opening, feet foremost, by the rest of the gang. If any sound is heard within the house that indicates the inmates' discovery of the attempt, those of the thief's comrades who are standing outside the breach will cut off his head without more ado; for one can never be sure that a man will not betray one unless he is dead.

I remember one night when the rain was falling in torrents, roaring like a waterfall at the head of a ravine. Nevertheless, it seemed to me that I had heard a sound of a suspicious nature. I had gone to bed, but I rose and went into the adjoining room, which was my work-room, in order to light a lamp. As I was crossing the threshold of the doorway connecting the two rooms I stumbled over a human body, and even in stumbling my hand came in contact with naked skin, thickly anointed with oil. The Chapper-Bhands always enter a house in a state of absolute nudity, and anoint their bodies with oil so as to make it impossible to hold them. I called for help, stood up, and at the same time, felt some-one push by me. When the servants arrived, a few minutes later, there was no one to be seen, but the hole in the wall was sufficient evidence that I had interrupted an attempted burglary.

Among the Brahmins and Pariahs

III. KUMARAN

A Portrait of the Modern Hindu Student.

Some years ago the schools and colleges of Malabar had no accommodation for the large numbers of boys and young men who flocked into the city from the country districts in order to absorb the knowledge of the West, so that they were forced to lodge somewhere in the city, in low-class boarding-houses, and often enough in houses of ill-repute. I have had occasion to visit many sick scholars, and it was heart-breaking to see the poverty in which they lived and worked. I found as many as ten, and even fifteen students, living in a small, badly ventilated room; and among them were some who had contracted infectious diseases. A small, slow-burning oil-lamp stood on the floor; there was neither table nor chair; in one corner, rolled up inside a bamboo mat, was the bed, which consisted of a worn-out pillow and a blanket. These students' boarding-houses were the breeding-places of tuberculosis.[1] On one of my usual evening strolls I once came upon one of my students, who was leaning wearily against the mud wall of a hut, holding in his hand the text-book from which he was preparing his work for the following day.

[1] Since then the conditions of life in India have improved in this connection. But in the days of which I write I felt that in the whole of God's wide world the Indian student was of all creatures most deserving of pity. But the last three years in my own country have taught me that between them and German students who do not come from well-to-do homes there is no longer any very great difference.

It was in one of the darkest by-ways of the fishermen's quarters. The lanterns, instead of dispelling the darkness, seemed only to emphasize the dismal character of the neighbourhood. Kumaran, for that was the student's name, had taken refuge by a street-lamp, because one of his three fellow-lodgers, who had already for a week been sick of a fever, had only just fallen asleep, and he, who was nursing him with brotherly devotion, was anxious not to disturb his sleep. Still, his work must not suffer; for his parents were poor, and, like himself, were impatiently anticipating his success in the examinations.

He begged me to go with him to see his sick friend, who, in all probability was already awake, for he was very ill. We went to the place where Kumaran's comrade lay, through dark alleys in which no one was to be seen at that hour, save now and again a night-watchman, with a smoky oil-lantern and a long bamboo staff. When, bending our backs, we crept through the low doorway into the room, the sick youth was tossing restlessly to and fro in a violent fever. Two other youths lay close beside one another, swathed in their thin blankets, against the opposite wall of the hut; but it was only a small, faintly flickering oil-lamp that revealed the wretchedness of the room.

In a whisper, Kumaran told me his friend's story; since then I have heard two similar tales. He belonged to the priestly caste of the Brahmins, and, like so many of his kind, was paying the

cost of his studies by performing his priestly function at weddings and funerals for a modest fee. The sick man—so Kumaran told me, and the Brahmin confirmed it by a faint inclination of the head—had, during the previous vacation, been invited to a wedding in a Thug family, living to the south of Calicut.

Those who know their India are well aware that the Thugs, or caste of stranglers, still exist, despite the strict measures taken against them by the British Government at the time of the Indian Mutiny. The members of this caste make no secret of their adhesion to it, although they have discontinued the exercise of their hideous calling. As a matter of fact, they still offer their sacrifices to Kali, the Goddess of Death; it is only the manner of killing that has altered. Instead of sudden, violent death by the cord or the knife, they now make use of a poison that works slowly but surely. Very often they administer to the victim a poison that does not take effect for months; for example, fibres of bamboo, which are chopped up into short lengths and mixed in the food. The almost invisible splinters bury themselves in the intestines, where they give rise to protracted ulceration and inevitable death. The impossibility of determining on what day and under what circumstances the victim is poisoned ensures the murderer against trial and execution. Had not my faithful servant once intervened at the right moment I myself should have fallen a victim to the goddess Kali in a certain town of the Nimar district.

It is true that the inhabitants of the town warned the young man—but he was poor; the few rupees which he would receive in payment for his priestly services would not be sufficient to meet his college fees for the coming term, and he believed himself to be under the protection of his gods. A few weeks later he showed signs of illness; his stomach would no longer tolerate the least trace of nourishment, with the inevitable result of collapse and fever. He was convinced that he had been poisoned.

I promised to return next day and left the house. As I went out into the dark night I was followed by Kumaran, who asked my permission to walk a little way with me. Kumaran had quite won my heart some time before this. About six months before this date he had been attending another school. One evening, as I was sitting in the verandah, with a few of my pupils, chatting of this and that, he appeared in the company of one of my students. After this we saw one another almost every day, either of an evening, when the sun poured forth its fiery rays upon the sea, or in the daytime, on the Maidan. At the end of the scholastic year he came over to us and for some time became a resident student. But as soon as his friend fell ill, with whom he had come to Tellicherry, from Mahé, that idyllic little French colony, he begged me for permission to become a non-resident student, so that he might lodge near his friend. At the time of which I speak we were not meeting so frequently, for his twofold labours—that is, his studies and the

work of nursing his friend—occupied all his time. Only now and again was he able to come to see me, at a late hour of the night.

My visit to his friend had moved me so greatly that I did not yet feel like returning home. We turned into the road leading to the European cemetery, a point of land which, surrounded by slender palm-trees, is washed on all sides by the foaming breakers.

The gate stood open, and we entered. Suddenly the dense clouds that filled the sky parted like the curtain before a gigantic stage, allowing the silvery light of the moon to come flooding through it. The tombs, many of which were very old, shone, dazzling white, newly washed with lime and overgrown by sweet-smelling shrubs. This resting-place could tell us many a tale of adventure, of many audacious hopes, of joy and suffering. There were inscriptions on the tombs dating from the time when the first Europeans had settled on the palm-clad coast, full of wild anticipations of immeasurable wealth. How many lay there who would soon have returned to Europe with their pockets full of gold, but were swept away and carried through the cemetery gates by the fever endemic in these parts. A stone slab, and on it a few brief details : Born in such a year, in this or that country ; died after a short illness ; and below, a pious text ; and so ended a life.

We wandered amidst the graves until we came to the white wall, below which breakers hurled themselves against the shore, and there we sat

down, in silence and deeply impressed. Suddenly Kumaran laid his hand on my knee and said: "Sir, I love you very much." The tone of his voice thrilled me more than the sense of his words. I have never heard such a musical voice. Even his fellow-students were conscious of its magical charm. When he spoke all others were silent.

And again he spoke: "Why does mankind suffer? Why are we not permitted to understand the purpose and the aim of our sufferings. Surely behind all the calamities that mankind has experienced since its first moments of consciousness—behind all this there must be a purpose, an end and an aim!"

"Yes, Kumaran, our hearts do not bleed in vain; nothing is meaningless. Not even the death-struggle of the meanest worm, although we cannot conceive of the purpose with our crude senses."

From this evening onwards we conversed almost nightly of spiritual matters, and in time he confided to me the profoundest aspirations of his soul.

At the time of our first acquaintanceship the Theosophic Society was spreading its roots all over India, and students, as well as educated folk of every class, were almost wholly occupied with religious questions. Even he, who could no longer adhere to the traditions of his fathers, had for some time been a Theosophist, because he had hoped and believed that in Theosophy, he would find the truth, the key to the meaning

of life. But before long he felt himself out of sympathy, both in thought and feeling, with the teachings of Theosophy, and since in Tellicherry the Christian missionary societies were more active than anywhere else, he began most seriously to consider the teachings of Christianity. He conceived of personality and the fate of Christ in the sense that God-made flesh has, by His Life, shown the way to the true ministry of God and to godliness.

Nevertheless, he did not become a member of any church. To him Christianity and church-going were two different things. But when he spoke of Jesus, and of the Sermon on the Mount and His final prayer on that solemn evening when He sat at table, for the last time, with those whom He loved, then he became filled with such enthusiasm that his eyes shone and his voice began to tremble. It was his belief that he was called to play a special part in the world, that he himself was to become a Christus, a Cross-bearer.

Not long after this night in the cemetery he told me that he had now found his work, and that it would lie among the outcast children in the fishermen's quarter of the city. One evening he took me to the little school which he had opened and in which he himself was teaching. There was perhaps a score of children there, including children of the poorest mendicants; and they greeted him as though he had been an angel from heaven. Less and less frequently did he spend his nights in the college hostelry.

His indefatigable spirit was always finding fresh opportunities of giving practical expression for his love for humanity. And his love was like a flame that spread to those about him and seized upon his comrades. Before long my little hostel was the home of inspired apostles; Kumaran had a task ready for every man, a work of compassionate charity.

His studies, unfortunately, suffered from such proceedings, and one day an elderly woman appeared in my study, a woman whom I recognized at the first glance as Kumaran's mother. She was profoundly anxious about his son, for his father wanted to make him return home and work in a lawyer's office as copying-clerk, having heard of his activities. I soon remarked that the woman, who, in accordance with the ancient custom of Malabar women, had bared her bosom [1] on entering my room, was completely on the side of her son. But as a good wife she obeyed her husband, and said not a word, to me or to her son, to the effect that she secretly approved of his proceedings. As matters fell out it was not long before Kumaran entered my room, greatly surprised at finding his mother there. As the son knelt before his mother and

[1] In Malabar married women bare the bosom before respectable persons; only the courtesans cover it. There is a legend which refers this usage to a law promulgated by a king, who, when he saw that certain unnatural desires were gaining ground among his male subjects, issued a proclamation that honest women must go with bared breasts, in order thereby to arouse desire. As a matter of fact, the result of the practice is that in South India homosexuality is more deeply rooted than anywhere else

reverently touched her foot with his forehead all desire to oppose him left her. On bidding her son farewell she blessed him as though the parting was to be an eternal one. As a matter of fact, mother and son have not met again, since that hour in my study. He obeyed the law that destined him to a life of religion, and his father cast him off. There was a brief interchange of letters between the two in which the father held me responsible for the change in his son. I was sorry for the poor man, who wished to see his son in a lucrative post, but I knew that it would have been useless and even criminal to oppose oneself to a destiny so obviously fore-ordained.

After this, three months went by like a flash, and the long-anticipated rainy season, the monsoon was approaching. The nightly strolls among the ruins or to the lonely burial-ground were discontinued. However, Kumaran's visits were none the less frequent on this account, and on many a night we sat in my work-room, while out of doors the torrential rain crackled down on the leaves of the palm-trees and the swarms of midges and mosquitoes assailed the circle of light thrown by the lamp. Towards the end of the rainy season his nightly visits suddenly ceased. He was not at the hostel, and his fellow-students could give me no information as to his whereabouts. I was extremely anxious about him.

Then, one Sunday morning, while I was bandaging some half-dozen lepers on my

verandah, as I often did, and relieving them of the horrible crusts formed of coagulated pus, he suddenly appeared on the threshold of my work-room. Standing in the open door he looked like a painting of the Saviour in its frame. He did not come forward to assist me, but stood there watching me at my work. But then, when the last leper had received attention, and had poured the rice given him from his gourd-shell into the sack which he carried slung over his shoulder, he suddenly came up to me and kneeled before me, saying: "Master! Brother! I have found him!" I put my arm about his shoulders, and behind closed doors, where no one could disturb us, he told me what he had been doing during the last few days. "Feeling that I am destined, appointed, to some special service, but not knowing where I should find the voice which would show me the way to my duty and my life's work, I rose from my bed in the night and went out into the wood that lies between Tellicherry and Mahé. I wandered away amidst the trees, fleeing from all human contact and seeking God. But the gods of my fathers were silent. Even Kali, the Holy One, to whom I have prayed every day, since my childhood, in a spirit of pious faith, vouchsafed me no reply to the questions that my soul was asking. I sought also for truth in the new religion which Theosophists have brought us. But here too I found nothing but confusion and disputes as to mere words. I remembered the teachings of your Christian priests; but in which of the

churches was the truth to be found when all were fighting one another, in defence, not of the truth, but of mere empty dogmas? Then, like a ray of light, the image of the Son of Man entered into my soul: just as you have described him in our confidential midnight talks, and I remembered your remarks, that Christ would never have been accepted as a member of any of the Christian churches, and that love was the only thing that could bring us to God. So I turned back, in order to ask you to tell me still more. And then I saw you again, surrounded by those lepers, and a light shone into my mind."

When he left me I knew that the fate of one human being was sealed, and that yet another had found his God, or the way to God, through his love for his fellow-men. On leaving my house he went straight out of the city to the little colony where the lepers of the neighbourhood dwelt, and begged that his services might be accepted. At first they would have nothing to do with him, but they could not withstand his love. And so he became one of them. After this I met him from time to time in the bazaar, where, playing on a lute, he used to sing hymns and collect contributions for his brothers in the leper colony. In the course of time he transformed that dismal spot into a paradise. Creepers, bearing clusters of sweet-smelling flowers, climbed up the posts of the verandahs, and that home of pain and suffering was surrounded by a garden. Little by little the

numbers of leprous beggars in the streets of this city disappeared; and therewith the risk of contagion incurred by the sound and healthy.

Even to-day I feel a cold shudder seize upon my heart when I think of that Sunday morning when the little band of lepers came to me. Their leader was still a powerful and able-bodied man, but the tips of his fingers were already touched with gangrene, and his teeth were carious, and of his eyebrows no vestige was left. White and black patches of disease covered the whole upper part of his body and his bare feet, and when he opened his mouth one saw that it was full of decayed teeth. Behind him those in whom the disease was further advanced formed a dreadful hierarchy of decay. Last of all came one who was a mere human trunk, legless and armless, his lips eaten away by leprous ulcers, his scalp hairless, his ears perforated, and where his nose had been, was a hideous, smirking cavity, like that of a death's head. This mass of unspeakable misery was laid in a small box, which moved upon wooden wheels. A cord was bound about the body of the leper that came last but one in the procession, and with this he drew the little cart after him. When they had reached the verandah before my study they called out in whining tones: "Pity Sahib! Have pity! Help us, Sahib, have pity on us!" Thereupon I did for them the little that I could do; at first I found the task almost unendurably nauseating, but afterwards I grew used to it: I washed their wounds and bandaged them.

Now and again I tried to speak a few cheerful words, in order to bring some light into their souls, which were wrapped about in the darkness of abysmal suffering. But Kumaran, full of determination, brought about things that would never have occurred to me. He alone revealed the nobility of that love that can come from God alone.

For seven months Kumaran lived and suffered like a brother amidst the unfortunates beyond the city gates. In vain did his mother go to the gates of the lepers' home, where she laid herself down in the dust, and wept for her son, imploring him to return to the arms of his parents. In vain came the father himself, and threatened to lay his curse upon the boy. Kumaran had found the way to God. He remained where he was.

There one night—I had just put out my lamp and was about to go to bed—I heard someone demanding entrance at the garden gate. I lit the lamp again and went out. On the farther side of the gate stood a leper. He had come to me because his friend lay sick of a fever. Before dawn I knelt beside Kumaran's bed and saw that he had not only contracted malignant typhus, but that the first signs of leprosy were already visible upon his body. It was soon over. Next day, before the dawn appeared in the flaming gateway of the East, he breathed his last.

And even before he died he was with God. For the words that we who stood beside him

heard upon his fever-parched lips were words of divine ecstasy. The lepers, his brothers, to whom he had sacrificed everything, including the most precious possession of the young—his hale, immaculate body—followed him to the end and gave him burial. There was not one of them who did not strike his palsied hands against his forehead, and with uplifted voice mourn for his lost brother. But the seed of love that Kumaran sowed there has sprung up and borne precious fruit. For when it became known that he was dead, another young man, a member of a much esteemed family, went forth to the lepers' home to share the lives and the sufferings of these outcasts whom God has doubly afflicted.

Why have I included Kumaran's story in these pages? Only because I wanted to show the Occidental reader of what noble stuff the modern Indian student is made. Like Kumaran, there are thousands who daily offer up their lives and their abilities to their mother-country; for her they worship as a goddess, and the day will come when they will see the realization of their prayer as promised by the old singer:

> Out of unreality
> To the radiant reality,
> Out of the darkness
> Into the dazzling light,
> Out of Death
> Into Immortality!

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